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American Dramatists Series

Hated The Persian

Nannie Sutton Purdy

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American Dramatists Series

HAFED THE PERSIAN

A PLAY IN
FOUR ACTS BY

NANNIE SUTTON PURDY

11



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HAFED THE PERSIAN

CAST OF CHARACTERS

HAFED, Chief of the Ghebers.

AMIDAR,

SERJUS,

ROBIER,

JAFEZ,

ALZARMAN,

HUJIR,

GUDARZ,

} Prominent in the Gheber band.

OMAR, Caliph of Arabia.

AHMED RAMAH, A Persian Deserter, now General
in the Arabian forces.

HASCHEM,

ALGEDDIN,

AD VAKASS,

HILLAL,

} Arabian Generals.

ABDALLAH, *et al.*, Arabian captives of the Ghebers.

BUFFOON, A Persian at the Caliph's Palace.

DARILLA, Daughter of Algeddin.

ZENNA, Waiting-woman to Darilla.

ILYA, A Singing-Girl at the Court of Arabia.

Chamberlains, Dance-Girls, Musicians, A Body of
Ghebers, Arabian Soldiers, etc.

TIME: The Seventh Century.

ACT I. A Persian sea coast.

ACT II.

SCENE I. A room in a dilapidated Persian fort.

SCENE II. The Gheber Fort—as in Scene I.

ACT III. An apartment in the Caliph's palace.

ACT IV. The Caliph's Court-yard.

HAFED THE PERSIAN

ACT I

SCENE: *A Persian sea coast. In the foreground, extending back, L., the rocky summit of a mighty wall-like cliff, beetling over Lake Oman, that stretching rearward below, R., reflects a sky of oriental splendor. Far away on the cliff, L., a glimpse of an ancient fort, almost hidden by boulders. In the background, bordering the deep-dyed horizon, a hazy, jagged coast-line, gleaming like mother-of-pearl, fronted by a sombre purple-bronze crag sprung sheerly up from the sea, and flushed at the top pale flame-color, as with a crown of innumerable tiny fires. The whole scene steeped rich in color.*

At the rise of the curtain, a band of Ghebers, headed by AMIDAR, SERJUS and ROBIER, all equipped with bows and scimitars, appear climbing toilsomely by means of lassoes over the cliffside. Scrambling to the top, AMIDAR springs to his feet, and snatching from his back a flagstaff with folded banner, unfurls and swings it aloft, displaying a standard of Per-

sia, patterned after the jewel-studded leather apron of KAWEH.

TIME: *Sunset.*

*Amidar (Exultantly, waving his banner)—*Thus shall our Bird of Victory flap his wings in the eyes of Arabian Vultures! Vain is their stolen high perch 'twixt the sea and the sky! By Kaweh! this night they should fall, had they crawled to the sun for a roosting!

*Serjus (Nodding to the flag)—*Ay, but hood the Bird yet—lest the Vultures harry him meanwhile;—yonder they huddle!

(Points to the fort.)

*Amidar—*Fit quarry for Persian hawks—and the fiend, after! In an hour, every road will be blocked, and yon shackle surrounded: On! On!

*Serjus—*On with good-will! But I, being squeezed of my wind, will wait here for HAFED. *(Sinks on rock.)*

*Robier—*And I, out of pure preference. *(Reclines near SERJUS.)*

*Amidar (Scornfully)—*Ha! Our Leader found lagging?—

*Serjus—*Ay,—he who nods not on duty found *Algeddin and Ramah* were not, as ye thought, arrived from *Medinal*! As for yonder—*(Indicating the fort)* I think on mine oath, Al Hafed disdains them, and for very pride of his arms forbids us to strike till the Arabic Cock-buzzard comes with the fierce-beaked *Ramah*!

Amidar (Contemptuously, turning to the rest)—By the bones of your sires!—all that plod not

like camels, but speed to the goal all-conquerors,—follow! and stay for no man! (*Hurries on.*) (*All follow save SERJUS and ROBIER.*)

Serjus (*Rising and pointing after the band disappearing*)—Beware of the Wingèd Victory!

Robier (*With a jerk of his thumb*)—Amidar? Wherefore?

Serjus—In that, being born a cock-sparrow with tricks of aping his biggers that dangerously swell him, he aims to make plumes of his pin-feathers!

Robier—He shall but fall as he flies—and no hurt to me!

Serjus—*Thee!* Atom of Paltriness!—art thou the Hope of lost Persia? The Sword that shall lead her to liberty?—Who thought of thee?

Robier—How!—The Sword is afraid of a cock-sparrow?—

Serjus (*Seizing him hotly*)—Trifler! Gibest at Hafed?

Robier (*Springing up, hand on weapon*)—Be less touchy, or jest shall bear earnest, friend!

Serjus (*Moodily,—releasing his hold*)—Peace!—I trust you,—and therefore, *watch with me!* Al HAFED, eyes front to the foe, overcomes the raised weapons of Hate, but sees not behind him the bows of Ambition and Jealousy,—nor reckons that he who with ease fells an ox, may die by the dart of the puniest!

Robier—What!—Amidar!—*traitor?*—*Assassin?*

Serjus—Traitor—Assassin—are wide words, Robier; there are treacheries black as the pit, before which no banner is lowered; there are more ways *to kill* than by the mere thrust into Nothingness,—or fewer dead men would be walking the world

with full five senses. (*Vehemently,—his face working with emotion*) I say again,—*Watch!*

Robier—Ay, but what is my lord Prince to thee, to kindle such fears?

Serjus (*Wheeling and flinging out his arms passionately*)—The Sun and Moon of my Universe!—Breath in the nostrils—pulse in the veins—*Life*—and all with it! Yea, he is Youth to mine Age—Spring in my Winter—Child of the Childless—*my friend!* (*Sinks down on the rock again, his head bowed on his bosom.*)

Robier—Man! (*Stepping to him, lays a hand on his shoulder*) I press you not—yet, ere I sink in this quicksand of mystery, know—Trifler I may be—Light-Head I am,—but False-Heart never one found me,—and I swear what doth menace our general strikes also at me. If it ease thee to name it,—speak!

Serjus (*Rising hurriedly*)—I speak! that to-night, should I lie dumb yonder—(*Points to fort*) thou, True-Hand, mayst still balk the trickster who grasps at the Helmet of Hafed!

Robier—No ass hopes to hide ears under it?—

Serjus—Asses hope anything. (*His gaze broadening*) I look back some seasons, *Robier*, to a desert fainting at noonday. The yellow breast of the plain seems darkly streaked as a tiger, for the King and his noblest of Persia, betrayed—overpowered, fled here to the holes in the hills, to rally *and die* for this land, and their flight was written in blood. . . . Like a star shot out of the West, a horseman darts in the open: the sun leaps from his lance to fondle his mailed breast with a million kisses—for he whose steed spurns the earth as though

it would sully him, comes as a lord among men, or the wraith of a Centaur. . . . Nearer and nearer, unslacked, though jaded and dust-blind, he sweeps like a wind to the North, bearing good news to his master,—the brave—the ill-fated Isdigerd. Khorassin—Hamadan—Rhé—crushed under heel by Arabia, have risen out of their death-throes to strike a last blow for their country, to break the base bondage of Islam,—to rescue the throne of their King,—to free him or perish! . . . Suddenly, out on the sands, horse and rider pitch flat in the dust. The proud beast that went as if winged lies senseless and prone,—dying for faith to his master,—even as he shall for his . . . *King of All Heaven!—Why should the noble end thus?*

Robier (Impulsively)—You knew him—you loved him?—

Serjus (With emotion)—I knew him—I loved him—*well*. . . . The soldier, quick up, distraught scans the waste; a trickle of water may stay the life that is flitting,—when lo, nigh at hand, a green fringe shadows the rocks! He dashes toward them,—he glimpses Earth's emerald goblet filled full of Heaven's own life-wine,—and the light leaves forever his eyes, his scull cloven through by three out-springing Arabs,—blood-lecherous spies of the Caliph. . . . *He was my son, Robier, and I saw his slaughter!* . . .

Robier (With a sympathetic movement)—Alas!—poor Serjus.—

Serjus—I had followed, unseen, round-about, lest some peril undo him who scoffed at all danger. But the empty space cheated me, and lest I be mocked in the beard for a craven beldam, I halted

back of the open till he should pass over. Fool that I was,—half a league lay between us! . . . I saw,—and was gripped with a palsy; ere my horse could leap forth, another sprung over the slope, and charged on the Arabs. Uprooted, I spurred madly forward—the earth swayed around me,—forms mingled—blades flashed—one glittering shape in a river of blood wavered everywhere— Then I knew nothing. . . . When I looked next, a stranger kneeled by me. My lips touched water. A-nigh, two Arabs stretched dead, with their horses whinnying by them; the third, mounted, was fast disappearing. What matter?—my world had crumbled. I looked from its splendid ruin, back to him who had succored me. . . . His mien and dress were not ours, and as he bent down, a jewel hid in his vest swung loose on a ribbon of France. Enough! *It was Hafed.*

Robier (Aghast)—Hafed!

Serjus—Born Henri de Rohan—Frenchman and Christian—

Robier—*You dream!*—or grief hath wrought madness—

Serjus (With a wide deprecating gesture)—The old answer when Truths have mastery! What time was there for a frenzy? My all was slain—The King in jeopardy—Persia a shambles. Vengeance—Justice—Loyalty—sounding their clarions, silenced the whines of Creed and Custom. . . . I crawled to my knees, and besought the Frenchman and Christian, in the name of God and Oppression, to forward our fight for life and liberty. Say that I raved—or that Heaven had sent us a liberator.—Not twice I prayed, ere he lifted his sword, and

swore by its graven cross to wield it for Persia!
. . . We bore my hero's body to the hiding-place
of his King,—finished his errand—and spurred to
the front at Hamadan . . . Rohan the Frenchman
rode there Hafed the Persian,—unconquerable
leader of our cause.

Robier—'Tis the strangest news ever reached
these ears! And now?—

Serjus (Wheels, intensely)—Now—*The King
for whom we dared much is dead at the hands of
a hired traitor; jealousy creeps—and the path of
Hafed grows perilous!*

Robier—It leads through the hearts of all Per-
sians—

Serjus—We are hot-heads, all:—One breath of
this matter would start yonder—(*Pointing to the
flame-tipped crag in the distance*)—such fires as
never kindled in worship! He whose Tri-une re-
ligion polluted the altars he saved,—though be-
fore them he kneel to our Deity,—the infidel
stranger—dog of the street,—usurping the lead of
our patriots—(though God knows none there con-
tended him!)—What were his portion but *death*
—by the fires he outraged!

Robier—*Never! I swear—*

Serjus (With a forbidding gesture)—Be not
fooled— Swear but to shield him!—

Robier (Raising his hand)—That too, and—

Serjus (Catching his arm and pointing)—*Look!*
—By the Lord above—*women—*

Robier—Arabians! strayed from the fort—
Quick!—to the cock-sparrow!

(*They disappear around the rocks as DARILLA
appears with ZENNA, R.*)

*Zenna (As DARILLA lingers, gazing seaward)—*La, la!—stopped again, Mistress? If you see aught strange in the face o' sea-water, dip a bowlful tomorrow and bend elbows a-top till it sprout coral and flying-fish; but get now within! (*Motioning to the ruins.*)

*Darilla—In! (Looks toward the ruins, shuddering)—*To vaults, where dark walls stifle the body and dark thoughts stifle the heart! Let me breathe God's air a little longer!

*Zenna—*Hoity-toity! This finnick mood comes from the sun-glamor yonder; 'tis next to a moon-rise for making young folks fools.—By the bones of my grand-dam!—outdoors or in, I am as sound o' wind as a yearling filly! 'Tis time you were housed, say I; what if your father should meet us?

Darilla—'Tis a far road to Medina . . . my father comes not till night,—and tonight—(*Looks again at the water and shudders*)—I think he will not chide me. (*Approaching the waiting-woman*) Zenna! dear, good Zenna—think you my father would ever take me back to his heart if I were patient, and sought hard to please him?

*Zenna (With a passionate gesture)—*Please him! and thou turned infidel? Since thou hast shut ears to the voice of our holy Mohammed—may his power redeem thee!—to worship with Christian outcasts, thou hast plunged into that father's heart a dagger which each day thy conduct turns!

Darilla (Imploringly)—Zenna!

Zenna (Hotly)—'Twere not enough—God defend him!—his old age should be vexed with this strife in the land—that he must leave the lap of

Ease in his own home to smother forever the fires of these heathen idolaters; a sorer strife tears his breast, since the pearl of his bosom hath dropped from his heart to the mire of the Nazarene swine!—Heaven scatter them!

Darilla—Zenna! Zenna!— So bitter against me? Have you forgotten the babe that lay on your bosom, having no mother beside—? When my father was wroth, hid I not in your arms? You shut them against me?

Zenna—Not till you pray and pipe blasphemously. What!—shall I mock the beard of the prophet by listing to hymns of one you call “Holy Virgin” and “Mother of God”? Go to—you should pilgrimage to Mecca a-barefoot!

Darilla—Then I have lost *you*, and am all alone!

Zenna (*Caressing her*)—There, there!— Put up lip like that, and I am beat again. Scold thee I will, weep for thee I do,—but set me down for a blockhead whom Allah pardon!—love you I must,—willy-nilly. So — (*Coaxingly*) — come along and taste of his Highness’ supper. *A good meal*, saith the adage, *is a weapon against care*; which is sense never got into a sunset. Come!

Darilla (*Embracing her*)—I love you—oh, dearly I love you!—but I cannot return—yonder—yet! I should suffocate! If you knew— (*Chokes back a sob*) When my father comes back tonight with the Emir, Ramah,—

Zenna (*Interrupting*)—We shall see a pair that show by other men as roaring lions beside wild asses!

Darilla—Ay—for lions rend the helpless!—

God forgive me to speak it of my father! When they come,—do you know what my father demands of me?

Zenna—I know what *I* should, in his place; that you show forth radiantly pranked,—fresh from the musk-box, and spangled with jewels like a new-burst rose, as becomes the daughter of Araby's mightiest satrap, and—(*Courtesying low*)—the most beautiful Princess on earth. Then, when you came to your senses, and knelt at the altars of Islam, you should straightway espouse the noble Prince Ramah—

Darilla (*Vehemently*)—Oh, *no! no!* You have been as my mother, almost,—you could not force me to the arms of a man whom I fear!—whom I loathe!

Zenna—Allah save us!—an evil spell is upon you! Had I such a lover, I warrant there'd be no airs! Stands he not as a cypress steeping the hill-top,—his eyes twin eagles cleaving an amber cloud,—his beard, both Night and Moon-bow? Yea,—dressed and trapped, withal, like a sultan! . . . *Bah!* Let a maid be comely, straight turns she a ninny! Well,—and what did your gracious father deign to require of you?

Darilla—That I renounce the Christian faith—

Zenna—Fatherly desired! Shall he see you in the pit and plan no rescue?

Darilla (*Chokingly*)—And pledge myself to wed, as soon as this strife is over, with Ahmed Ramah!

Zenna—Excellently considered! Why should the handsome Emir's love grow baldheaded *before* marriage?

Darilla—Oh, Nurse! — Nurse! — Soften your heart to me! I must promise all this, or tomorrow be sent away,—ay, you have said it,—an outcast! I shall lose my own father!—God help me,—I shall lose even you! My father has sworn he will harbor no infidel, nor a daughter who thwarts him!

Zenna (With renewed caresses)—Tut, tut, Chit! Disobey your kind father?—Flout so magnificent a suitor? What are you thinking of?

Darilla (Passionately)—Of the Emir!—and how I abhor him!

Zenna (Starting away from her)—You are mad!

Darilla (Smiling faintly)—Nay, only nearly so! (*Turning away despairingly*) It is as I feared,—you cannot help me. Leave me, then, here, while you go about supper;—a bursting heart is better out of doors.

Zenna—Leave you!—

Darilla (In a low strained tone)—If you have mercy!

Zenna—If! If I have a liver! (Going) Take your way; could any but our own people happen here, I'd not be such a fool. (*Pauses*) Let thinking turn you less stubborn, mistress; salt your discretion with this: you have two to reckon with, and methinks it were better for a maid that she died than live to scorn Ahmed Ramah! (*Goes.*)

Darilla (To herself, looking after ZENNA)—I know! I know!—it were better that she died! (*When the nurse disappears, DARILLA stretches her arms entreatingly, as if to embrace her, then drops them hopelessly, glances shudderingly at the sea, and turning her back to it, draws from her bosom a small*

gold cross, which she kisses and replaces; then, kneeling down on the rocks, she prays low and tremulously:—)

Mother of Mercy!—Lamp of Love—
 Tho' winds and darkness hide from me
 All stars of Hope, I cry to thee—
 And grope through Night to Light above!
 I pray thy pure eyes may not see
 How scarred and dust-defiled come I,—
 But lead, O Virgin of the Sky,
 Where thy Sweet Son waits pityingly;—
 Then, Shepherd of all Sheep that roam,
 Stretch out Thy Hand, and draw me home!

(As she rises, her face shows set and colorless. With a hurried glance around, she springs to the topmost rock, raises her arms in mute appeal to Heaven, shuts her eyes and casts herself over the cliff. Almost as her scream rings out, HAFED, bearing her in his arms, climbs over the rocks. DARILLA has swooned, but appears unhurt. Bearing her to a smooth bit of ground, he snatches off his scarf-belt, spreads it down, and lays DARILLA upon it. Drawing from his bosom a tiny vial, he pours some drops through her lips, replaces the bottle, and moving off, watches her. DARILLA revives, half-rises, sees him, utters a faint shriek, and falls back.)

Hafed (Quietly, not moving)—Why did you do that? Have I a dragon's-head?

Darilla (Sitting up, agitated)—Nay, but——(Stops.)

Hafed—Horns, perhaps?

Darilla (Breathlessly)—The peak is impassable

yonder—my father has said so. How came you there?

Hafed (Showing his hands and the lasso he carries)—Mainly by these and this.

Darilla (Her voice sinking)—I—I thought you—a demon!—a Gheber!

Hafed (Smiling grimly)—You preferred to be saved by the Angel Rizvan? He was not here!—(As she attempts to stand, he steps forward, and lifts her to a large rock, where she may rest comfortably)—But Devils are ever at hand.

Darilla (Impetuously)—Why—oh, why—did you save me?

Hafed—I had no time to think.

Darilla (Astounded)—What!—Had there been time—!

Hafed—Ay, even then, perchance,—seeing you are a woman,—

Darilla—Ah!—

Hafed (Calmly)—No more than a scratching cat,—not worth while drowning.

Darilla—Oh!—(Stepping down from the rock, and drawing herself up, proudly) Sir!—(Her manner suddenly changing) Nay, though you speak rudely, you have meant to be kind;—I wish I might thank you,—but, had you only known!—I am fainer to die than to live. (Turning away wearily) You have but delayed me; I *must* die!

Hafed—All the blooms of the garden must fall.—(Approaching her,—more gently) But for you, the buds are still sheathed; the sun is new-risen, and the birds in your heart should be singing. Why are you miserable?

Darilla—I?— (Clasping her hands in anguish)

Oh, Heaven!—how help it?—when my father cannot love me, and my lover, I cannot love!

Hafed (Starting, frowns)—*Love?* Heaven and Earth!—'tis the curse of the world: the scourge of a thousand thongs! You reach for the lash?

Darilla—I detest Ahmed Ramah!—(*HAFED starts*)—He is cruel and vengeful; but my father is—my life; losing him, there is nothing for me but to die. (*Going*) Farewell, sir!

Hafed (Overtaking her)—By Mithras!—you go not thus—a wounded hare to the hunters! Let me speak with these two!—It will go hard with me, but your gods of good and evil shall swear peace with you!

Darilla (Hurriedly)—Never! You little know them— My father, Prince Säid Algeddin, warring now with the Ghebers,—you have heard of his valor?—

Hafed (A light flashing into his eyes)—Ay,—latterly, much!

Darilla—Then you know 'twere but vain to clash with him; as for the Emir—he is a monster nigh dread as—(*Looking around fearfully, lowers her voice*) *Hafed himself!*

Hafed (Forcibly)—*As Hafed!*—

Darilla (Raising her hand warningly)—The Gheber-chief,—a human tiger, called *Fire-Fiend*. (*Without seeing his change of expression, shuddering, crosses herself*) Ah, hush!—I am like the children who cry at his name—

Hafed (Loudly)—*What?*

Darilla (Creeping nearer)—Hush, *pray!*—'Tis whispered his fathers were *genii!*—that he passes unknown, save his steps sear the grass—

Hafed (Involuntarily glancing behind him)—
Ha!

Darilla (In a half-whisper, clutching his arm)—
You see—?

*Hafed—*A fieldful of lilies! (*As she draws back puzzled*) Ay, more:—that the babbling of fools and burrowing of moles crack the best ground! (*Abruptly*) Can you trust me, or no?

*Darilla (Timidly)—*I think so,—there are no lies in your face.

*Hafed (Bitterly, half-turning away)—*You are fresh in the world; I have known a woman's eyes speak such as would gainsay the writ of prophets, and shove Truth herself in a corner;—falsehoods a false tongue choked on,—yet the face was the face of a vestal! (*Facing her*) Still, for your sake,—(*Gives her a scrutinizing look*)—despite you look somewhat vestalic,—I'll speak with Algeddin—

*Darilla (Retreating)—*Nay, I pray you! You cannot, and—*hark!*—(*Voices are heard in approach*) Oh, go!—they are coming!—My father—the Emir!

*Hafed (Hand on sabre, advancing)—*Fortune smiles; I will meet them.

(*DARILLA sinks down in despair by the rocks,—being hid, as ALGEDDIN and RAMAH, with several armed attendants emerge 'round a boulder.*)

*Algeddin (Stopping at sight of HAFED some paces off, waiting)—*Ha! (*Clutches the Emir's arm*) By all fiends—the Gheber!

*Ramah (Snatching out his sword)—*Then, demon or man, I'll at him! (*He rushes at HAFED, who, with a powerful swoop of his sword, at one blow, disarms him.*)

(DARILLA starts up with a scream, ALGEDDIN, amazed, springs to her.)

Hafed (As RAMAH leaps to his weapon)—Remember the words of Rustem: (*Points down with his sword, significantly*) "*The earth is dry and cold: the air of Heaven is soft and balmy!*"

Algeddin (Hastily)—Hold! (*Low to the EMIR*) *Forget you the Master?* (*Motioning DARILLA aside, with ill-suppressed fury to HAFED*) *A father's wrath waits on the word of his sovereign!* By supreme command, know then, Infidel,—the King of Kings, Omar of Arabia and Persia——

Hafed (Imperturbably)—*The King of Thieves—Robber let loose on Persia:*—straighten his titles!

Algeddin (As RAMAH makes a violent gesture)—*Forbear!* (*To HAFED*) But that we carry the word of our august ruler, our blades, insolent Heretic, ere now had stilled thee! In the name of the most illustrious Caliph, we demand fair hearing.

Hafed (While DARILLA, amazed, looks from one to the other)—In whose name ye will,—by Sun and Moon!—no shifty palaver shall cover his villainous deeds,—whether the open spoiling of Persia or the secret murder of King Isdigerd!

Algeddin (Trembling with rage, to RAMAH)—Speak on! Shall this chawer of worm-wood smear me with spittle forever?

Ramah (Struggling for control)—His Mightiness, the Supreme Emperor of the Faithful,—whose shadow endure!—deploring his subjects' bloodshed, has charged us with certain commands, to be on sight delivered to you. We, therefore, as proxy for his most illustrious Majesty, warn you all rebellion must cease, or be crushed out most direly.

Hafed (Leaning quietly on his sword)—Say to *His Mightiness*—and his entire sum of magnificence:—If it be rebellion for men of unquellable courage to battle against hopeless odds for the peace of their homes, the freedom of their lives, the faith of their fathers, their country's happiness and their soul's honor,—we are, and will be to our last breaths—*rebels!*

Ramah (Contemptuously)—A fool's bravado! What is your handful to the hosts of Omar? A dust in the whirlwind!

Hafed—Ay, patriots are few in Persia, since some *over-cautious* souls turned traitor!

Ramah (Flushing—and exasperated)—What then hope ye, rebelling?

Hafed—Freedom!—Or along her last march from this land to the sky, to follow her banner! For, by the Monarch that reigns there!—we are well agreed,—rather than live in chains, to die in liberty!

(The EMIR motions impatiently to ALGEDDIN, and receives from him a parchment bearing the seal of Arabia.)

Ramah (Brandishing the paper)—Behold! Our ever-glorious Emperor, with incredible magnanimity, offers you life in his favor,—your past forgotten in a future allegiance to the true faith and its Defender; for all that kneel with you, free amnesty! What say you now?

Hafed (Erect and strongly)—I say Caliph Omar is a crowned Brigand who drove millions of rogues to seize a King's throne, and bought the King's life of traitors by jingling of coin! *(The EMIR, wincing, looks down. HAFED advances a step)* I say,

Black Raven of Persia,—or with your changed feathers, mayhap, *White Owl of Arabia!*—I'll not be one of the sleek slaves to stoop to the Moslem while a sun shines in the heavens, or the earth holds room for a handful of ashes!

Algeddin (Thrusting forward and pointing to HAFED's cap)—Then pluck down your Simurgh-plume, and cast it in some fiend's fire,—for without magic, you die! (*With an arm-sweep toward HAFED—to his attendants, loudly*) *Allah Acbar!*

(*With raised scimitars, they rush, shouting, at HAFED. In the same instant, HAFED, blowing a loud whistle, a body of armed GHEBERS leap over the rocks, and confront them. The ARABS recoil in dismay.*)

Algeddin (Aside to an ARAB)—Quick!—Masud with the troops!

(*The ARAB speeds out unnoticed.*)

Hafed (Having signed his men to draw back)—My lords, such *magic* is ominous: return to your capital! Arabia sits at her feast, draining the red wine of Persia and deeming her stronghold impregnable:—let her watch the Omnipotent Writing, lest under the walls of her Babylon a river be turned!

Algeddin (Disdainfully)—Your Persian parables are flimsy fabric, much tinseled—

Hafed—For the maid's sake, I warn you plainer:—start with her now for Medina! You shall have escort;— here—at this moment—is danger!

Algeddin (Wheeling, derisively)—Ay,—when I sucked mother's milk, there was danger of choking!

Darilla (Falling at the feet of ALGEDDIN)—Dear father—believe him! Let us get Zenna and go!

Algeddin (As the EMIR bends to raise her and she shrinks from him with aversion)—Up, Moon-Face!—*Know you what you say?*

Darilla (Imploringly)—I know—I feel—this man would befriend us!—that he speaks as a true man and soldier—

Algeddin (Menacingly)—*Silence!*

Hafed (Sternly—interposing)—Softly!—for her sake you live!—

Algeddin (Fingering the hilt of his dagger,—to DARILLA)—Now by God the Creator!—how ye met—what's between you—I know not,—but you hold not us both by the hand! (*Grasping DARILLA's wrist*) Is it *me*, girl, or *him*?

Darilla (Striving to throw herself on his breast)—*Thee! Thee!* Oh, when was it other?

Hafed (Aside, folding his arms)—Never, one of my mind!

Algeddin (Keeping her at arm's length)—Wait! Choose your ways here:—You accept the true faith, and—(*Glances meaningly at the EMIR*)—good fortune that waits you?

Darilla (Blanching)—I accept—Heaven help me!—the faith—I believe to be true—(*Draws from her bosom the cross, and holds it up, tremblingly*)—but not—(*With a shuddering glance at RAMAH*)—the good fortune, you mean!

Algeddin (Hurling her violently toward HAFED)—Then back to your infidel lover! You mock me no more! (*The GHEBERS start threateningly.*)

Hafed (Who barely saves her from falling—half-drawing his sword)—By Heaven!—you goad me! Think you we crawled there—(*Points to the preci-*

pice)—like beetles and hung there like bats for a love-tryst? Our work was with you!

A Gheber (Fiercely flourishing his sword)—Ay!—Vengeance for Persia and Isdigerd! Why hold we back?

Others (Fiercely flourishing their swords)—Death to the Moslems! Death to Assassins!

Hafed—One moment, Comrades! (To ALGEDDIN)—Your child's love for you was a lily shot up in our war-path; to spare it, I held off a battle—

Ramah (Mockingly)—Battle,—ha!

Hafed (Disregarding him—to ALGEDDIN)—Swear to treat the maid well, and still you shall go hence to safety.

Algeddin—Swear terms to thee, impious braggart? Then, may the fiend's arrow strike me! Lead on thy troop against seven!

Hafed—You are numbered and trapped like foxes: the troops now hid in your hold—(ALGEDDIN and RAMAH start and change color)—are surrounded: mine wait but a signal—

Algeddin and Ramah (Springing forward almost together)—'Tis false!

Algeddin (Trying to reach HAFED)—Save yourself, Boaster!

Hafed (Fencing him off)—Back, Arab! Why tempt me?

Darilla (Frantically, clasping the arm of her father)—Father! Father!—for my sake!—

Algeddin (Frenziedly, aiming a thrust at her)—Thou, again?—

Hafed (Who strikes up ALGEDDIN's dagger, frustrating the blow)—Madman!—Shame! Shame!—(ALGEDDIN, reeling back from the shock, falls on

the sword of RAMAH, who has aimed at HAFED. Groans mingle with cries.)

Algeddin (Writhing in the arms of EMIR,—to the same)—Avenge me!

Ramah (Lifting his arm)—I swear by the Lord of the Kaaba!

Darilla (Wildly, leaning to her father)—Strike! Strike! Would you leave me? (As ALGEDDIN motions her off, a vast tumult sounds in the distance. The ARAB dispatched by ALGEDDIN runs up breathless.)

The Arab—Fly! Fly! All is lost here!—The Persians— (Sees ALGEDDIN and breaks off, terrified. The GHEBERS spring forward shouting triumphantly.)

Hafed (Ringingly, over their cries and the distant clamor)—Men!—By your manhood, put the maid safe! Man a boat!— (Several GHEBERS spring over the rocks,—others turn to assist him.)

Hafed (To Darilla)—Come!—Courage!—we'll save you!—

Darilla (Motioning to her father)—Never!—Never!—from him!

Hafed (Imperiously, as the clamor increases)—Come, I say!—'Twere your death—I'll not leave you here!

Ramah (To DARILLA)—Why shrink from such gracious protection? No other is left you!

Hafed (As DARILLA seems stunned)—For Life and Honor's sake,—hasten!

Algeddin (Summoning a ghastly strength,—to DARILLA)—Ay, go with your Beast, silly Beauty! (Points to the GHEBERS.) Your Guard of Honor is waiting—Jackals—Leopards—Hyenas! Go—

light a new blaze to his fire-god! (Slips from the EMIR's arms, heavily.)

Hafed (Desperately to DARILLA,—the noise ever swelling)—For the God you believe in, come!

Darilla (Heedlessly,—flinging herself in an agony down by Algeddin)—Oh, live! live!!—and—what mean you?— These Persians— (Lifts her hand to her brow confusedly.)

Algeddin (With a last effort, raising himself)—I mean— (Points with a look of hatred to HAFED)—he,—your new hero—has killed me!— (HAFED, starting, dumbfounded, meets the horrified stare of DARILLA.)

Algeddin (His voice hollow and gasping)—That your Israfil,—silver-tongued angel—and henceforth—your only—protector—(Grins horribly)—is your country's—arch-foe; the world's—arch-devil! . . . Cut-throat—butcher—fire-fiend—Reaper—of Hate—and curses—God!—'tis my daughter's—lover— He—Hafed—the Gheber! (Dies.)

(DARILLA, with a cry of terror, falls swooning across his body. The din in the distance deepening, PERSIANS and ARABS rush shouting together,—save the EMIR, bent over the dead man, and HAFED, who standing an instant, as if paralyzed by the sight of DARILLA, suddenly snatches her up in his arms, and hurrying to the cliff-side, begins, thus burdened, its perilous descent.)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE I

SCENE: *A room in a dilapidated Persian fort. In a niche, L., a stone altar, studded with dim-burning torches. On the right, gathered around a small table bearing a platter of fruit and a wine-jug, a dozen or more GHEBERS, lounging on rude stools and benches, are munching or drinking. At the right, left, and center-rear are entrances. At right-rear, two small windows give glimpses, as from a great height, of blue low-lying water and a far, bright coastline.*

TIME: *The next day.*

First Soldier (Flourishing in one hand the platter; in the other, the jug)—Figs, and scant meed of Moscalla!—But he that remains then unfilled, may surfeit on Conquest! (Raising a goblet) Drink—to the Despot's down-fall!— (Cheers: they drink)—Drink—Confusion to Islam!— (Cheers: they drink)—Drink—to last night's victory!— (Cheers: they drink)—Drink—To Persia and Hafed!— (Cheers: all drink.)

Second Soldier (Springing up)—Now, by the

immortal Hydarnes!—he that pledges lord Hafed drinks to the despot's down-fall,—Islam's confusion—Persia and Victory! Gods of the Greeks!—when he had put the girl safe, the thieves sprawled down in his path till earth showed redder than heaven where the sun died!

Third Soldier (As their cups are refilled)—Ay, twine for our Lady o' Victory necklets of rubies!—whose diadem goldenly flames with the fall of Algeddin,—the capture of Ahmed Ramah!

Fourth Soldier—And what, O Sirouz, concerning the gem of the diadem?—the Arabic maid who was smuggled from sight at the first din of battle?

First Soldier—A fitting reward for the conqueror: covet her not—she is Hafed's.

Fourth Soldier—Nay, by this hand!—Such treasure is settled by lot——

Third Soldier—Your lot would be settled full soon did you carry this further—— (*There is a burst of rude laughter.*)

Fourth Soldier (Springing up,—hotly)—By Ahramazd!—I yield her not dumbly—I have heard her speak, and the nightingales do but mock her; she herself shall decide us! (*Starts to go.*)

First Soldier—Soft, soft, O too-ready lover! The maid's door is held by he-dragons without and a she-one within! (*More laughter and gibes at the FOURTH SOLDIER.*)

Fourth Soldier—By whose order?——

First Soldier—PRINCE HAFED'S.

Fourth Soldier—Destruction! The bird was caged quickly—— Has no sugar passed through the bars?

First Soldier—Thou knowest, most scurrilous

Fowler, AL HAFED has ne'er crossed his threshold since we returned hither; that Hujir and Gudarz have been constantly with him in conference: that for thee or any man the guards of her door are quite incorruptible—(*Springing up and whacking the FOURTH SOLDIER on the head with the empty platter*)—that the figs are all eaten,—thy betters half-starved,—and except thou go forage for food thou shalt die like a slave of a cudgeling! (*All spring up, and with laughter and shouts, belabor him with goblets and platters, clear out of the room. At the door, R., they are met by SERJUS and ROBIER, leading in RAMAH, bound and blindfolded.*)

The Guards—Way for him summoned by HAFED!

A Soldier (Mockingly,—to his comrades)—Way!—Way! for the Owl to the gallows-tree! Ha!—Ha!—Ha! Ha!—Ha!—Ha!—Ha! (*They hustle past, jeering as the trio enter.*)

Serjus (Unbandaging the EMIR's eyes and motioning, with mock ceremony, to a bench, pushed up by ROBIER)—Repose is sweet:—Will the illustrious Emir,—Past Prince of Persia, Now of Arabia, and Would-Be of any Country that paid more,—rest, and digest his incomparably—*new*—Koran?

Ramah (Ignoring the motion)—Dog! Free me of these—(*With a tug at his bonds*)—lend me a stave—and you shall have rest forever!

Serjus (While ROBIER takes up his post at the door)—My lord jingles the keys of Paradise, but I and this blade have more work to do ere we come there! (*Feels of his weapon's edge reflectively.*)

Ramah—Then to it, hound! I am tightly tied, and I fear not the devil!

Hafed (Entering, R.)—The better fortune; he suffers twice who anticipates—and you—may not go to your due directly. (*Motions the GUARDS to retire.*)

Ramah (Fiercely)—Your wit is well-weaponed, Sir Gheber; had I the dagger your villains last night snatched from me, I would answer you pointedly!

Hafed (Drawing a dagger from his belt)—Let this replace it, when it unbinds you—thus! (*Cuts the cords from the EMIR's arms, and offers the dagger.*)

Ramah (Amazed, snatching the weapon and drawing back suspiciously)—I am taken—why set a trap?

Hafed—To draw the truth from you, *Ramah*, without any compulsion. (*As the EMIR stands, hand on dagger, watching him*)—Will your Excellence sit?

Ramah (Sitting guardedly, while HAFED seats himself opposite)—Compulsion or no, 'tis useless to speak of our plans or resources; I am still Musulman!

Hafed—If it teaches you honor, the conversion is fortunate. (*As RAMAH starts savagely*)—Pray, O Excellence, sit! (*The EMIR hesitates, then doggedly reseats himself*). Could you for once, and to save your head, act honestly? (*The EMIR half rises.*) Nay, remain seated, I beg!

Ramah (Thrusting the half-drawn dagger back in his belt, sarcastically)—Do me the honor to think so! What then?

Hafed (Smiling slightly)—Then—instead of the fate deserved of all traitors, and decreed by the stars for you finally, you would go back free to your Emperor,—with even some color of credit.

Ramah—Proceed, O Rewarder of Virtue!

Hafed (Gravely)—I shall seek your Caliph's protection at once for the daughter of his dead general: also,—my men being *prejudiced* against entering His Majesty's capitol,—I must ask of him a suitable escort—not more than six persons—for the maid and her woman from hence to Medina.

Ramah—You are mad!—or you mock me!—Fling away the prize in your grasp?—*Darilla?*

Hafed (Coldly)—These two must go quickly to safety. He whose right hand was Algeddin would seem their best guardian,—and you whose life, twice forfeit, is sworn to Algeddin's cause,—you shall be my ambassador.

Ramah—*I!* But if I decline, O self-crowned Lord of the Universe?—

Hafed—You will not, O Prince of Discretion! In fact, *you live but for this*. Prove worthy the charge, and your life will be saved, though it sprout for the Mower fresh villainies:—swerve from faith but a hair's breadth, and vengeance shall find you, though you hide in the mantle of Omar!

Ramah—He shall earn life, indeed, who unscathed sues favors for Omar's *defier!* (*Suddenly approaching HAFED*) O, Blind to your Interests!—*kneel with me—say only, La Ilaha—*

Hafed (Rising quickly)—Save breath! Is your monarch so base you need more than tell him Algeddin is dead and his daughter the *Gheber's captive?* But mark well, O Emir,—he that blots by a breath

the scroll where the maid's name is written, shall soon cease to breathe, though he lie on the Caliph's bosom!

Ramah (Springing up,—scornfully)—Yet you love her not! Bah!—the sun never shone on your birth— You dropped from a waning moon and froze in mid-air! (*Meaningly*) Strange chance for a *Persian*!

Hafed (Suppressing a start—firmly)—Not stranger, great Emir, than that of *the Persian who lately turned Arab*! Less strange than this chance for his life. . . . You accept it?

Ramah—What else? At needs, I should pay the fiend's price: Life is Life! Let me out of this hole,—give me boat or horse, and point my direction,—since we got here the devil knows how!

Hafed—So be it: your guides will explain how the Caliph's envoys may reach us. (*Giving a ring*) This insures their safety. On the day the two women leave here with Omar's pledge of protection I release all Arabian captives, *provided*—the Caliph's escort includes not Prince Ahmed Ramah!

Ramah (Going)—Scorpion!—why not he?

Hafed (Bowing low, and again half smiling)—Your excellence will appreciate, the best of us have our whims! (*Steps to the door and raps. The two GUARDS re-enter.*)

Hafed—The Emir will start for Medina:—show him the pass, see him safely off, and report to me.

Ramah (Stopping on his way out)—Grant me first, three words with my sister's husband, Abdallah,—that I bear her some message of comfort.

Hafed (To the GUARDS)—Let them speak brief-

ly and privily,—ye and the door-keepers in sight. (*To RAMAH*) And you, noble Emir, would better not finger the dagger; your guides are some prone to be hasty. (*The EMIR slowly lets fall his hand from the weapon, darting a look full of venom at HAFED. As the trio go out, SERJUS contrives to pass HAFED.*)

Serjus (Low)—*Forbid!—he means mischief!*

Hafed (Low)—*Let him do none:—hasten! (As they pass out, HAFED opens a door, R.) Lustam!—(A guard enters.)*

Hafed—What of the maid?

Guard—She is even at hand, with her woman.

Hafed—Lead them in. (*The GUARD retires, to reappear with DARILLA and ZENNA. DARILLA looks pale and grief-stricken: ZENNA, terrified, sobbing, resentful.*)

Hafed (Pointing the GUARD to rear door)—Stand yonder! (*GUARD moves.*)

Zenna (Dropping hysterically on her knees and clinging to DARILLA)—Allah save us!—here we are, in the lions' den! Mercy!!—What will be, will be!

Hafed (Approaching DARILLA, gently)—When you are free of the water-spout, I pray a word with you.

Darilla (To Zenna)—Rise!—Calm yourself, my poor Zenna—(*To HAFED,—her voice all a-quiver*)—Sir, I am ready to listen, but since—since last night,—my ears seem cracking with sounds that fill my sick brain to bursting;—I crave all your patience—

Hafed (Unconsciously moving toward her, with great gentleness)—And all my patience is yours!

(DARILLA, raising her eyes to look at him, drops them quickly to cover her tears.)

Hafed (*As though touched by the sight of her*)—I would gladly bring you some balm of magical soothing, but this side the stars, he called the Heart-Healer is winged like a bird, and they travel far who find him. . . . (*As she makes a despairing gesture*) Yet be not so wretched!—Even now means are shaping to render your state less intolerable; you shall soon be returned to your people—

Zenna (*Shrilly*)—Yah—ah—ah!—Then I shall be butchered!—Mohammed!—he parts us!

Hafed (*Beckoning the GUARD at the door*)—Take this person out until summoned. (*She is led away, shrieking in terror.*)

Hafed (*As before to DARILLA*)—Your kindred will tenderly care for you—

Darilla (*Low and hopelessly*)—You forget I am Christian; my people—my kindred—all died last night!

Hafed—You have powerful friends at Medina—

Darilla (*Smiling sorrowfully*)—Nay, sir, I think—the last of my friends went yonder! (*Motions after ZENNA.*)

Hafed (*With sudden warmth*)—You still have another, believe me, who will find you proper protection. It seems years ago, yet the bloom is not sped that had blown when you trusted me—Trust me again?—

Darilla (*Struggling for control, as she turns from him*)—Yesterday—I was weak and sinful—may Heaven forgive me!—but my eyes were still shut to the world's last mockery—when men in

Truth's image—speaking Truth's tongue,—*did murder!*

Hafed—By all that is sacred, you wrong me!! At the cost of my life this hand would have shielded your father—as it only strove to save you!

Darilla (With a passionate gesture of misery)—Ah, whom—*whom* shall I trust? My father said all you deny——

Hafed (Earnestly)—I swear by no oath ever tarnished—I pledge you across the sepulchre of my Mother,—as to his death and your safety!

Darilla (Half stretching her hands to him)—I would trust you!—I could—but—(*Shrinks back*)—when I think what men call you—(*Shudders*)—And now to be *here!*—(*Glances around fearfully.*)

Hafed—The casket is rough for the pearl, but from the moment you entered your purity reared here a Mecca of inviolable sanctity; I guard it as distant as Arafa!

Darilla (With a sudden outburst)—I shall go mad if I stay here!—for I know now I must not kill myself. . . . All night I have sat at the window looking down—down—down—into chasms of blackness leaping with spectral fires—roaring with hidden waters—empty of ground or pathway: as though some spirit of Evil had snatched me up from sweet earth to a sunless eyrie! . . . If you are not—what they say—why do you live here?

Hafed (Half-smiling, and lowering his voice)—'Tis *whispered* my fathers were *genii*! (*In a natural tone, leaning nearer her*) See you not,—I, who in Arabic fables become every beast in the jungle, am—God help us!—but a poor half-demon in Persia? You remain here only till—— (*A hub-*

bub without interrupts him. Loud laughter from the GHEBERS mingles with shrill scolding from ZENNA as the men surge in, pushing and dragging her amongst them with airs of mock gallantry, while one, affecting a love-lorn look, picks on a blue-ribboned lute. As DARILLA shrinks back away from them, HAFED steps in front of her.)

A Gheber (Offering ZENNA grapes)—Sorceress of Love!—but taste—that the vine and the rose may commingle their precious perfumes! (All laugh derisively.)

Zenna (Turning on him fiercely)—Adder of Earth—away! (HAFED, about to interfere, is stopped by the reappearance of SERJUS and ROBIER, who engage him aside.)

Another Gheber (Proffering ZENNA some olives)—Nay, Enchantress—with honeyed lips touch what is tart, and sweetmeats shall lie on the dish! (More laughter.)

Zenna—Vermin! would they were poisoned! (Knocks the platter out of his hand.)

Darilla (Low and protestingly)—Zenna!

Another Gheber (Drowning her words—to ZENNA, as the men fall to at the table)—Thy voice, O Peri flown out of Paradise!—is music that makes the heart drunken!

Zenna (Aiming a blow at him)—Dog!—thou wert drunken already!

Darilla (Pleadingly)—Zenna!!—

Gheber (With the lute, ere joining the rest,—to ZENNA)—Ah! those hands—like gentle oysters, soft homes for pearls—shall give us who feast a new Anahita and a new Heaven. (With a low reverence, presenting the lute.)

Zenna (Snatching the lute and cuffing him soundly)—A drubbing, villain, they'd gladly give thee for stealing!—and a cleansing will I give *this* ere Mistress touch it! (*While DARILLA with difficulty silences ZENNA, aside, a GUARD enters.*)

Guard (Saluting HAFED)—My lord, the captive who spake with the Emir, Ramah, asks to acquaint you and your company with weighty news.

Hafed—Bring him in. (*SERJUS and ROBIER draw aside.*)

Darilla (With a gesture toward ZENNA)—Sir, shall we not go?

Hafed—Nay, a moment wait yonder—(*Leads the women aside to an embrasure covered with leopard-skins. Unobserved, they see and hear what passes as the GUARD ushers in the prisoner, an Arabian of striking appearance, whom the GHEBERS, turning, eye attentively. The GUARD retires.*)

Hafed (To the ARAB)—You would speak with us?

The Arab (Impressively)—I would change with you—(*By a gesture including the rest*)—vital services. For life and freedom, I will point, O simple Persians, to one amongst ye whose patriot form, plucked of his cloak of hypocrisy, shall stand forth blackly a traitor! (*There is an instant of consternated silence. The GHEBERS, amazed, look one at another.*)

Hafed (Solemnly, amid great stillness)—I think you lie; for I should stake my own life blindly on the faith of these—(*Indicating his men*)—and their brethren. *Your word* will never blacken them.

The Arab—And what if I offer proof that, tongueless, lies not? By Mohammed!—(*Looking*

around scornfully)—I counted not ye would shield him!

Hafed—You mistake: you shall be free, thrice-fold, when you prove here a traitor!

The Arab (To the others)—And ye, by your honor, hold to this pact?

The Ghebers (Scoffingly)—Ay,—Oh, ay!

The Arab—Then here I denounce him whose messenger just sped to Omar with treacherous overtures! The terms of your sale were easy: Protection for a beautiful Princess till she be called for—*(DARILLA in her shelter starts up excitedly)*—and a lieutenancy over your southwest provinces! For these, you would be delivered at once to the power of his Majesty, as witness—*the ring of Hafed!* *(Holds it up. With a choked cry of rage, HAFED wrests the ring from him. The GHEBERS leap to their feet. SERJUS, with the spring of a wolf, has his blade at the ARAB'S throat when HAFED seizes it.)*

Hafed (Tapping SERJUS' weapon)—Soil it not! *(To the ARAB, scathingly)*—Your Emperor sinks low, indeed, to litter his army with *perjurers!* *(To his followers)*—Men!—I have sent a proposal to Omar—*(General amazement)*—this ring was its surety,—still, I am honest! *(SERJUS and ROBIER cheer: the rest look astonished.)* Protection—the only fitting protection—I sought in the name of our common manhood, for the orphaned Arabian princess; yet, that a general of Persians stoop not to beg of an enemy, I pledged in return the release of our captives. That the ring lent for safety of Omar's envoys,—six or less persons—should be

given this man to buy life with, was an easy trick for his juggling kinsman, Ahmed Ramah my messenger!

Serjus (Fiercely—to the ARAB)—And hadst thou six lives, Spitter of Perfidies, thou shouldst lose all for this calumny!

Robier (Menacingly)—Let him now choke on it!

Others—Choke him!—Flay him!!—

The Arab (Raising his hand for silence)—You doubt me and the ring: let Omar's answer confirm me: wait it—and judge for yourselves!

Jabez—Shameless one!—freedom for insult? Rather be chained to the rocks till vultures tear out the tongue that would blast this, Persia's chief patriot!

The Arab (With folded arms and a slight sneer, pointing a finger at HAFED)—He there spake lately of jugglers; what think you of juggling that makes of an infidel stranger Persia's chief patriot?

Serjus (Drawing a weapon)—Viper!—not done? *(There are angry murmurs among the GHEBERS, who, scowling or derisive, seem in doubt how to act.)*

Amidar—By the Lord!—here is something covered! What mean you, man?

The Arab (Boldly)—That your general is doubly a cheat! Neither Hafed nor Persian—I swear by the soul of our prophet, a foreign adventurer has, with greed of ambition, gulled you and seized on your leadership! *(The GHEBERS, impressed against their own wills, stand mutely, breathlessly staring.)*

Serjus (Smotheredly)—Devil!—

*Robier (Forcing a smile)—*Nay, he is utterly mad—the man has illusions—

*The Arab—*Ask your chief whether this be illusion! (*Snatching from his breast a linen kerchief, he holds it up.*) It fell from his bosom one day by a desert spring. . . . Two Arabs lay dead at his hand, but the third rode away with this keepsake. . . . *Henri de Rohan* is wrought here under a coronet. . . . Will he deny it is his?

*A Gheber (Forestalling HAFED)—*Infamous Moslem!—who would debase him to answer?

*Another (Quickly, as HAFED would speak)—*We know, O Vender of Wisdom, we others are dolts and crackbrains; but tell us in pity if we are Fins or Hindoos—English or Esquimaux—Monkeys or Apes?

*Hafed (Calmly motioning them aside)—*I thank you all, friends, but he that is Hafed the Persian was born in truth *Henri de Rohan*; that is my kerchief. (*All look dumbfounded—SERJUS, ghastly.*)

*Hafed—*Guilty of this name I am, and of sharing your struggles, a stranger,—but of naught else the Arab has charged. *Ambition!*—Ye were bowed in the dust when Sympathy lent you this sword—Was I ambitious of *Ruin*? Such as I am, I ran to your rescue, and since I have held your cause sacred—broken no vow—betrayed no trust—plotted no treason—why should I yield up my birthright? I own it with joy, that under the vest of a Persian—even as a lock from the head of a Mother dead to me—I hug to my heart, unspotted, the colors of France

and the badge of Our Lady of Bethlehem. (*Throws open his vest, displaying them. There is a muffled cry from SERJUS, an exultant one from the ARAB—a gasp, as of joy, from DARILLA, which passes unnoticed.*)

Serjus (*Raising his arm passionately, as the rest stand consternated*)—Of France—yet more Persian than Persians!—

Hafed (*Signing him to be silent*)—Nevertheless, your country is mine! In her midnight hour of misfortunes, I chose her, dowerless, the worthy bride of my sword. Despoiled of her jewels,—half-lifeless with blows of assassins,—her beauty washed out with tears—she called to my heart for defence;—whether it answered her truly—whether, Frenchman or Persian, for her I have held my life cheap,—ye are witness. To say more would discredit your honesty.

Robier—Ay!—The Savior of Persia needs no defence to her people!—But for *him*—(*Points to the ARAB*)—let his blood wash out quickly his lies!

Hafed—Pah!—A swallow of wine will drown them—(*Pours out a goblet and raises it*)—Fill your cups, comrades!—As I trust in her truth, I pledge you *Our Lady of Persia*:

“Others may find another love as fair;
Upon her threshold I have laid my head,—
The dust shall cover me, still lying there,
When from my body life and love have fled!”

(*The men have mechanically filled their glasses but they are left untouched.*)

Amidar (Setting down his goblet)—With my lord's pardon, the wine is low—I have had my portion. (*Bows himself out.*)

Another (Setting down his goblet)—And I, remembering a wound, pray my lord excuse me. (*Goes.*)

Another—The toast of Hafed is echoed by every *Persian*; I would feast on it privately. (*Goes.*)

Another—And I say straightly, this coil confuses a plain man; I must ponder it ere I drink further. (*Goes.*)

Another (Stiffly)—When Truth and Error lock arms, 'tis dangerous company; let us look closer, lords! (*Goes.*)

Another (Going)—Methinks, indeed, our lord-general hath troubled incredibly much for this maiden—*our enemy!*

Another (Vehemently, joining him in the doorway)—*Maiden!*—Prate not of wenches, with Heaven's own altars defiled!—Before the Immaculate Symbol of One Supreme Sovereign, Hafed our leader hath knelt to a Three-Headed God! The breath of idolatry steeps in its foul miasma your holiest prayers,—God is mocked and the Crown of Isdigerd desecrate—(*Points at arm's length to HAFED*)—Ye follow a *Frenchman!*—*Infidel!* (*Passes out. The rest, with show of clearing the table, hurry after, save SERJUS and ROBIER. HAFED has stonily watched his men's withdrawal.*)

Serjus (His face drawn with anguish,—falling at HAFED's feet)—Hafed!—*Noblest of Earth!*—Why didst thou stop my defence of thee?

Hafed (Bitterly, raising him)—Because, in his blindness, Hafed thought not to need it,—nor

wished thine own compromise. (*Turning to the ARAB*)—We may dispense with *your honorable presence!* (*To SERJUS and ROBIER*)—Set him loose!—Let him taint the air here no longer, lest we die of the poison! (*The ARAB is led out, Rear. HAFED, as though unconsciously following to the door, stands gazing out, lost in reverie. DARILLA,—who in the shade of the embrasure has watched all, spell-bound,—half-hesitating, starts toward HAFED, but is plucked back by ZENNA.*)

Zenna (*In a fierce whisper*)—Miserable!—follow a traitor——?

Darilla (*Low*)—Nay!—Nay!—I believe it not!——

Zenna (*In a fierce whisper*)—Thy would-be betrayer!——

Darilla (*Low, putting up her hands, piteously*)—Nay!!——

Zenna (*Hissingly, snatching from her bosom a small dagger*)—Then will I kill myself!——

Darilla (*Clasping her,—scarce audibly*)—God!—I go with you!——

(*With a lingering, passionate look at HAFED, she yields ZENNA her hand, and they pass out unnoticed. After some instants, HAFED, rousing himself, turns and with cleared brow approaches the embrasure, but stops short with a fresh look of bitterness on finding it empty.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE II

SCENE: *The Gheber Fort,—as in Scene I. Before the altar, now ablaze with torches, a great company of GHEBERS in reverential attitudes, chanting a hymn of worship. Slant sun-rays piercing the windows wrap the figures in faint-colored mists, painting their raiment softly. Above and beyond, the altar lights burn brilliantly.*

TIME: *The following morning.*

The Ghebers (Chanting)—

Ere yet in formless void was raised
His Tent of white and blue,
The Light-of-All—His power be praised!—
Smote the all-darkness through.

Dread night His flaming lance did flee,
And by that primal pyre
The immortal Was—Am—Is-to-be
Proclaimed Himself in Fire.

Wherefore, O blazing Symbol, hail!—
Sole type of Purity—
Thy holy portent ne'er shall fail
While faithful bend——

Amidar (Bursting in wildly)—Up!—Up from your whining!—The way is open—save yourselves!

All (Starting up)—Ha! . . . What!! . . . The enemy——!

Amidar (Feverishly)—Enemies!—Persian and Arab!—By heaven, enemies! (Rocks with sudden fierce laughter.)

Jafex (Shaking him roughly)—Crack your nut soon, for God's sake!

Amidar (More controlled,—rapidly)—Ay, here's the meat of it! . . . For reasons mine own, I chanced out ere the day robed,—say, for a whiff of the sea! . . . But nearing those portals of Paradise, my Lady of Araby's window, I glimpsed there-trelliced a Moon-Flower this Bulbul fain would have piped to. Good!—I hop to a buttress, and am casting about for a hearing, when lo!—up the water-front, dilly-dally, comes my Lord Hafed. No marvel—just two of us sea-sick!—so, while he doubled my tracks to the wall, I hugged it, waiting his trick to the window. . . . He showed not; I peeped through a cranny—no inch of him anywhere;—easing up, I craned over the buttress. . . . Below, in the old altar-niche, by these eyes!—knelt Al Hafed,—praying by neither the red lips of Love nor holier symbol than the Cross on a heretic's sword! And then—then, as the fiend lives to laugh at us!—chanced a prettier trick than I looked for! . . . Gripping the stones, my hand slipped—struck a bolt—something slid in the wall and went THUD! . . . I looked down and pummeled my eyes,—but a stone door, at least, is no moon-shine matter, and that one had trapped my lord neatly! (Hugs himself with another burst of harsh laughter.)

The Rest (In a breath—consternated)—Trapped him!—You left him? . . . Hafed—?

Amidar (Shrugging—defiantly)—Why should I undo Fate's fastenings?—What is written, will be— (Cries of rage stop him.)

Jafex (To the rest)—Quick, to his rescue!— (To AMIDAR)—By Eblis!—if thou have killed him—

Amidar (Barring the way)—Fools!—hear me!—Al Hafed will last, but your Hour of Omen passes! Have ye thought on his walk by the water? (They pause, with attention arrested.)

Amidar—'Twas no Light o' Love tryst,—though as secret; he watched for the sail that should waft here the Caliph's cur with his message of compromise! Ill had it fallen in your hands ere it reached Hafed's!—And ne'er might it chance, but that—saith the adage—the prayer of the wicked confounds him. While he prayed, the boat landed; in a moment the Arab will be here. . . . Consult him!—then rescue your traitor!

The Ghebers (At variance)—So be it! . . . Well said! . . . Nay, traitor when proven!—You out-run the warrant! . . .

Amidar (Raising his arm, vehemently)—Weak Flounders all!—ye have come to the Rock of Decision, betwixt the two Seas! One way you must choose—with this Turncoat or no! Learn the message of Omar unmeddled with; if Hafed show honest, release him! If not,—spare your qualms; his doom is of Azrail! . . . But hasten!

Several Voices—Spoke justly!—The Arab!—See first the Arab!

Jafex—But *after?*—Who'd ward off the Moslem?

Amidar (*Proudly*)—I, Son of Al Hassam! (*They burst out in ridicule.*) Yea, by the womb that bore me!—in Hafed's own steps, save my faith be clothed in one color!

Jafex (*Smiling grimly*)—*The Shoes of Hafed are large.* . . . Do we coax, or compel this— (*AMIDAR signs warning as SERJUS enters with the ARABIAN.*)

Serjus (*Presenting the visitor*)—Ye that honor a valiant foe, salute him!—for a flaming sword sleeps now in the belt of Ad Vakass! (*The company and the ARAB exchange profound salutations.*)

Amidar (*Stepping out, quickly*)—I speak for all—(*By a gesture including them*)—who, knowing the bold Ad Vakass, show wonder-struck;—*why sleeps the sword?*

The Arab (*With a grave smile*)—That would I say to your Chief!

Serjus—Ay!—where's Prince Hafed? (*As no one speaks*)—Herjil!—Ammas!—

Herjil (*With averted eyes*)—I—have not yet seen him—

Ammas (*With averted eyes*)—Nor I—

Another (*As SERJUS looks wonderingly at him*)—I neither—

Serjus (*Suspiciously*)—*What!*—

Amidar (*Meaningly*)—The Lord Hafed had early business out by the water-front—(*Grins sardonically*)—*doubtless to welcome our guest there,*—and is not returned.

Serjus—'Tis strange—(*Eyes them keenly*)—

Why look ye, lords, to be chewing a mystery?—
(*Clutches the arm of AMIDAR, his voice trembling*)
—Is aught wrong with Al Hafed?—

Amidar (Shaking loose)—We shall know when we hear his message!—(*Signifying the ARAB. To the rest*)—Come!—Let us find Hafed!—he should be this way—(*Leads out, R. As they all hurry out, SERJUS moodily following, DARILLA peers in at the back mid-entrance,—her face showing white and excited. When all are gone but SERJUS, she steals in, and, finger on lip, signals him. Surprised, he lags till the others are out of hearing, then turns to her.*)

Darilla (Low)—You love Lord Hafed?—

Serjus (Eagerly)—Ay!—Ay!!—

Darilla (Low—hurriedly)—I think—I am sure, —there is something strange here!—At dawn, I was by the window, watching the first sun-spangles, when, glimpsing Amidar opposite, I sprung back till he should pass. . . . When I peeped out again he was gone, and Lord Hafed coming that way, seeming most pale and troubled. I—I know not how 'twas, but his look so drew me, I watched him come up to the parapet; then I sudden caught sight of a figure crouched on it under a buttress, peering down evilly. . . . (*Leaning close and whispering*)—*Amidar!*

Serjus (Almost grasping her)—Then?—and then—?

Darilla—I was so startled, I shrank down in terror—for Zenna was sleeping,—when something below crashed heavily. . . . I sprung up and looked—it was like black magic!—Hafed was nowhere—nothing had fallen—only Amidar hung over the

parapet, leering! Next moment he sprung down and seemingly felt of the wall with—(*Shuddering*)—*Holy Mother!*—what looks of triumphing malice!— Then *ran*—ran like a hare out of sight—even as I spied your boat landing! . . . And in all the time since Lord Hafed has never—

Serjus (*Seizing her arm half-frenziedly*)—*Come!—Treachery!—treachery!!* (*As he dashes out, urging her on with him, a confusion of voices and boisterous laughter sounds without, from the GHEBERS, returning. They enter, AMIDAR assuming to jest of HAFED with the ARAB.*)

Amidar—Pah!—leave this genius his vagary!—'Tis the vanishing trick of his forbears, the *Genii*! (*Suddenly fronts the ARAB,—his manner changed sharply.*) But, by the Lord!—though Hafed absent him, we others stand eager;—if it be not his secret, give us quickly your tidings!

The Company—*Ay!—to the point!—Come! Come!—*

The Arab (*Proudly*)—The word of my Master, I, Ad Vakass, betray not; I am sent to your Chief! (*There are groans and derisive mutterings.*)

Amidar (*With a significant glance at the rest*)—So! . . . And were there a paper,—some slight go-between from your humane Emperor to a graceless *Fire-Fiend*,—worth our considering? . . . (*Fiercely*)—Should we not rightly *seize it?*—

Ad Vakass (*Calmly*)—Perchance—but I should be dead first; and my Emperor—(*With a deep reverence*)—*May his shadow lengthen!*—has millions more to avenge him.

Amidar (*Springing forth with drawn scimitar*)—

Spy!—you acknowledge it?—(*At his gesture every blade flashes out*)—Then look you—we made no truce!—we have pawned no pledge!—our swords are awake!—(*He presses close on the cool, half-contemptuous ARAB,—his blade raised and menacing*)—Quick now, with your message! (*The ARAB, laying finger on lip, and gripping the hilt of his sword, steps back, shaking his head disdainfully; the GHEBERS, with howls of rage and aimed weapons, spring toward him.*)

Amidar (Barely holding their blows with a sign,—his own sword near touching AD VAKASS,—his face livid with rage)—Fool!—See you not?—the message!—or nothing can save you! (*The ARAB has been pressed back near the doorway, which, in the last instant, HAFED, pale and half-fainting,—helped by SERJUS and DARILLA,—has, unnoticed, reached. Ere one is aware, thrusting forward he slips on the ARAB's hand the ring first pledged for his safety.*)

Hafed (Imperiously,—lifting the hand of AD VAKASS)—But the ring of Hafed! (*There is instant recoil. The GHEBERS, amazed, fall back, lowering their weapons.*)

Hafed (Now erect and ringingly)—He that, betraying an envoy, shames here Persia and the dead Isdigerd, lays down sword in their service! (*There is silence. The men stand abashed; AMIDAR, hand on blade, fingers it sullenly. ZENNA peeps in and draws back terrified.*)

Hafed (Turning to the ARAB)—Forget this, my lord;—misfortune is salt on the heart,—oppression, a goad in the sore.—You have news for us?

Ad Vakass (Bowing profoundly)—Ay, Prince!

(*Draws from his bosom a packet.*) The Most High and Excellent Lord of the Earth,—The Axis of the Revolution of Time—Successor of Abubeker—Defender of the People of the True Faith—The puissant King of Kings, great Omar Ebn Al Khat-tab,—God's Shadow on Earth—on whom be the blessing of Heaven!—sends *this*,—(*Offers the packet*)—wherein, as a cup heaped with jewels, lies garnered wisdom.

Hafed (*Taking the packet*)—We thank him. (*Turns to DARILLA in the doorway*)—Lady, this matter is yours,—pray enter! (*SERJUS leads her forward*,—ZENNA, *with pursed lips, following.*)

Hafed (*Handing packet to AMIDAR*)—You have been anxious: read it!

Amidar (*Half-shame-facedly tearing open the packet, reads:*)

In the Name of the Most Merciful God:—

His servant, Omar Ebn Al Khattab, greeteth *Hafed* the Persian:—

Our faithful Ramah brings us your fair proposals, which have our favor; yet as somewhat remains for our common interests requiring a personal settlement, we name you our chosen escort for Princess Darilla and her servant here to our residence, pledging our word for your safety, coming and going. On this small condition, proving to us your good faith, we will receive and provide for both women as becometh the Princess' dignity. Otherwise we cannot negotiate. Praised be Allah, who ordereth all things!

(Signed) *Omar, the Caliph.*

(*The first sentence blanches all faces;—as, AMIDAR, hot and elated, reads on, hands clap to weap-*

ons,—eyes flash, and forms stiffen,—till, finishing, AMIDAR passionately crushes the letter and flings it at HAFED's feet,—who, deathly pale, stands as though carved out of granite. DARILLA, as pale, has grasped the arm of SERJUS, and unconsciously clings to it. For a tense instant no word is spoken.)

Jafex (To HAFED,—in a dulled tone)—What make you of this?

Hafed (Speaking as a corpse might,—his eyes fixed before him)—That the spider, Ramah, hath spun a wide web. . . . Nevertheless—(With a mighty effort rousing himself,—to the ARAB)—I will go to your Caliph!

Amidar (Fiercely, as his comrades show stupefied)—You would not attempt it—?

Hafed—What should hinder me? Frenchmen do not leave women defenceless—and in sooth there—(Points to the Caliph's letter)—is matter for personal settlement. (To ROBIER)—Come! Have the captives led out—the boats and the horses ready!

Jafex (Intercepting ROBIER, to HAFED, chokingly)—Stop!—You flee from suspicion?—

Hafed (Flashing a look around)—Let him stand forth that suspects me! (As they hesitate)—Is faith a matter of neighborhood? I am everywhere Hafed the Persian till Persia forswear me, but the fate of this girl is my care, and by my own honor!—hers shall not be tossed like a bauble amongst ye! (To ROBIER)—Go! (HAFED approaches DARILLA.)

Another (Thrusting forward and pointing vindictively to the girl)—For her sake, mark!—For a mincing jade sprung of her bloodiest enemy, Persia

is perilled! (*There are mutterings and some hisses.*)

Hafed (*With a shrug,—putting him aside*)—Ex-tol me not, friend! For a woman's honor there are everyday men who would gladly peril *the world!* (*To DARILLA, while the men scowl darkly*)—Will you make ready?

Darilla (*Falteringly*)—We are ready, my lord,—but—since these take it ill, give us another escort! We—we shall be safe, indeed! The Caliph loved—my father. . . . *Stay,—(Suddenly lifting her head, she looks around proudly)—and refute their calumny!*

Hafed (*Amazed, taking her by the hand, gently*)—I shall refute it, doubt not,—but I must go with you. (*Inclines to AD VAKASS*)—Precede us! (*The ARAB salaams profoundly and goes. As HAFED follows with the women, AMIDAR starts up furiously.*)

Amidar—*Persians!*—will you suffer it?

Several Voices—*Never!* . . . *This seals his guilt!* . . . *He defies us!* . . . (*With hands on their weapons, they leap to prevent him.*)

Hafed (*Towering over them*)—What!—(*Scornfully, his eyes on their weapons*)—You dare not, my lords! . . . By the laws of all countries men are innocent till proven guilty. You have tried, it seems, to fasten some treachery on me, but no atom sticks to my shoulders. . . . Mark ye more—without formal court-martial, my rank is unscathed as your general, and by the bright Day and dark Night!—he that draws on his chief shall be strung to a tree for his venture! (*They pause irresolute.*)

Hafed (One hand on his sword, the other held out to DARILLA,—blandly)—Will you come?—(DARILLA, trembling with terror, lays her hand in his own and is led toward the door,—ZENNA, stumbling with fright, close behind. When they have taken some steps, the GHEBBERS, surging together with furious cries, block the way.)

Amidar (At their head,—half beside himself)—Hafed, or Henri of France!—General or crowned Arch-Angel!—from the moment you enter Medina, we brand you a traitor to Persia,—so to be dealt with on sight!

Hafed (Coldly)—'Twill not be the first time that Justice, led blind-fold, has stumbled. (His glance covering them all) Lords!—in my philosophy, we weave at our looms as the stars color our threads, but no man may finger my pattern! (Draws and raises his sword determinedly,—his voice stern with command)—Let us pass!

(There is some hesitation, then slowly and sullenly, as though stupefied, the crowd about him gives way. Between them,—sword up and head high, looking neither to right nor left,—HAFED leads out the women. With a wild cry, SERJUS flings up his arms, with clenched fists beating the air.)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE: *An apartment in the CALIPH's palace. Ceiling inlaid with rare woods, supported on pillars of silver. Walls hung with tapestry. On the right, a curtained alcove. To left, a high and curving throne-chair, covered with tapestry of scarlet, flowered with gold. Enter dance-girls led by ILYA, playing softly on musical instruments. They seat themselves gracefully on banks of cushions, and continue their music. They are followed by court-chamberlains, nobles, Magians, wise men, etc., preceding the CALIPH and his attendant generals,—HILLAL, HASCHEM, AD VAKASS and RAMAH. Between their sumptuous uniforms, the CALIPH,—middle-aged, tall, dark, and robed in plain white,—is a striking figure.*

TIME: *Two days later.*

*Caliph (Seating himself, while the music stops)—*Let our Princess-guest and the Gheber, Hafed, attend us! *(Two chamberlains, making low reverences, withdraw.) (To the musicians)—*Proceed, O Joy-makers! *(The music continues. To RAMAH)—*You have fetched the ore from the quarry; help me cast one die in this metal, and we've coin to pass us through Persia!

Ramah (Bowing profoundly)—Pardon, O Great One!—the metal is rarely unmalleable; I may indeed heat it,—thou, only, can'st beat it!

Caliph—He comes!—(*Points to the entrance*)—By Mohammed!—I would he were of us! Our flags would fly higher—*Just Allah!* (*Breaks off, staring, as from the opposite side DARILLA enters with ZENNA and other attendants. She is richly apparelled, and sadly beautiful.*)

Ramah (Dryly, aside to the CALIPH)—You repent your protection——?

Caliph (Unheeding,—his eyes fixed on DARILLA)—*Pearl of the Sea!—Rose of the Dawn!* . . . (*Sharply catching RAMAH'S arm*)—*Why had you not told me sooner?*—

Ramah (Stammeringly)—My lord!—I——

Caliph (Low,—as DARILLA and HAFED approach)—*Present them!*

Ramah (Advancing, as DARILLA kneels with her women)—King of all Kings!—the daughter of SÄID ALGEDDIN offers her homage.

Caliph (Motioning DARILLA to rise,—with warmth)—The daughter of that brave soldier hath our love and friendship. Welcome! (*Motions her near to a seat, piled with cushions.*)

Ramah (Turning to HAFED)—And here, O Chief of the Faithful, the Chief of GHEBERS waits your will and pleasure.

Hafed (With fervor)—The Lord forbid it! Heaven's will, and a bit of my own pleasure, is all that I wait here, believe me!

Caliph (With dignity)—Heaven's will is our will, and our pleasure may yet prove yours; wherefore, and for the return of our subjects,—welcome!

(With a light gesture he turns off. HAFED, bowing with scant-veiled irony, flings himself at the feet of DARILLA.)

Caliph (His glance sweeping over the group of dance-girls)—Among these blossoms, where's our dainty thrush?

Ramah (Motioning toward ILYA)—Yonder, O Graciousness—

Caliph—Hither, sweet Bird!—and tune our minds harmonious. (She glides to the CALIPH's feet, and, posing gracefully, sings to her lute.)

SONG

The Night-Lily swings on a silver wave, a-top of
the turquoise Sea,—

And Love is a swift gull cleaving space for a home
in the heart of me.

Ah, Love!—find rest in another breast, till the
winds of the Sidrah-tree

Shall waft him hither, who ne'er passed yet yon
hill's blue boundary!

Oh, Dove of the soft-tuned song!—full long have I
mocked and railed at you,—

But the roses suddenly rocked today, in my yard
where a light breeze blew—

And I saw One there with Sun-bright hair, who
unto mine arbor drew—

And his locks were wreathed with musk-dewed
leaves that out of the Sidrah flew!

(The song finished, the girl, at a kindly nod from OMAR, returns to her place.)

Caliph (Turning to DARILLA)—First to the lady:—Princess, approach! (*She obeys.*) For thy father's valor, and thine own virtues,—nested in beauty as lilies in priceless porphyry,—we hold no honor above thee; and our bounty is boundless. Our care we offered,—(*Leans down graciously, his hands extended*)—and our kingdom give,—so far as wife may share it——

Hafed (Springing up as DARILLA reels back, aghast)—Never!!——

Caliph (Coldly)—Your guardianship has ceased! (*HAFED starts, disconcerted. To DARILLA*)—Speak, Shy One!—Shall the bosom of Omar not shelter his chosen jewel? (*HAFED, straining forward, hangs on her answer.*)

Darilla (Pale and trembling,—brokenly)—Pardon, Your Majesty!—I—I am not worthy—— (*HAFED, with an air of relief, straightens.*)

Caliph (With ardor)—The Sun gilds that which it shines on——

Darilla (Shrinking back,—wildly)—Nay,—Nay—I pray you!—*I cannot!*——

Caliph (Angrily)—Is the girl mad?—Or is it a sicklied coyness?——

Ramah (Hissingly)—She has been incited to this!——

Hafed (With the bound of a tiger)—*To this!*—*To what*, my lord Ramah?—The resistance of virtue to force?—The defence against craft of innocence? Or if coyness,—by Heaven!—well were she coy of *one-sixth* a man's heart,—seeing how five wives might scratch her!

Caliph (Smotheredly, as his officers clap hands to weapons)—*Stop! . . . (To HAFED, his face*

wrinkled with wrath)—We spare you yet, for our purposes! (*To DARILLA, his aspect softening*)—Cannot!—saidst thou: and wherefore? Thou art now thine own mistress,—fairest of women,—and chosen bride of an Emperor!

Darilla (Looking down,—cheeks scarlet, and fingers twisting desperately)—My lord,—you know not!—I am *Christian*!

Caliph (Drawing back, horrified)—*Christian!*—*(Suddenly smiling, he again extends a hand to her.) A casket of gems, the day thou confessest to ISLAM!*

Darilla (Sinking to her knees)—Forgive me, O friend of my father!—not even *his* love could avail,—my faith I must keep!

Caliph (With an abhorrent gesture)—Mohammed in heaven!—The wench is a shrew of iniquity! (*In rage—thunderingly*)—*Why art thou here?*

Hafed (Lifting her, and standing as tho' he would shield her)—For a broken faith,—a refuge denied,—hospitality shamed! You have much to learn of the *Ghebers*!

Caliph—And something to teach them! . . . (*Quickly, to RAMAH,—pointing a lean forefinger at DARILLA.*) She hath spurned both ourself and our holy religion; how punish her?—

Ramah (Vindictively eyeing her)—*A hundred stripes on the soles of her feet*—(*DARILLA uttering a cry,—ZENNA leaps to her; HAFED, snatching at his sword, sees a dozen blades bar it,—a dozen bent forms over-matching him, and stands fairly at bay.*)

Ramah (Continuing—his gaze shifted to HAFED)—And if she persist,—banishment to some island tending to foster repentance!

Caliph (Doubtfully)—Ay—'twere merited!—

Ramah—*Else Mohammed were sunk to a by-word,—the Caliph mocked in his Court!*

Caliph (Looking up, piously)—'Tis the will of Allah!—So be it. (*DARILLA, wild-eyed, stands motionless.*)

Hafed (Ringingly)—*What!*—you forswear yourself?— (*Raises his arm with a gesture so terrible, the CALIPH, instinctively, shrinks.*) Honorless hypocrite!—have you no shame of the world? Our mission is known,—betrayal means blood on your head—blood on your hands—and a blot on your fame neither legions nor time may wipe out! *You dare not!*— (*Again flash the officers' weapons,—again they are stayed by OMAR, even as he chokes with anger.*)

Ramah (Thickly)—*Let him be the scourger!*—

Hafed—*Not though my body be burned!* (*The CALIPH, shaken with rage, motions DARILLA back to her seat.*)

Caliph—We rest the maid's sentence. . . . *To you, now!*

Hafed—"Our common interests" still hold me!

Caliph (On the verge of another outbreak)—*You!*—Chief and abettor of rebels—you should be torn limb from limb and tortured of devils! (*With effort controls himself.*) A lesser mind had so sentenced you,—but the good of our empire,—the wreath of our greater glory—the spread of our faith,—forbid it, *if you may serve us.* (*As HAFED starts*) *Listen!* Our business in Syria languishes,—the Grecian dog lacks muzzling,—the fangs of Egypt drip rank,—while you waste our patience.

Your cause is hopeless; *you* there—(*Pointing*)—in this instant are helpless;—for love of your country, join us! Say the creed—consent to be our lieutenant there! Your past and your people's forgiven,—your future made golden,—*this maid shall then go unwhipped*—(*HAFED winces*)—and Persia shall rise from her ashes, a radiant phoenix! (*Pauses.*) *Refuse*,—(*His brows bend darkly*)—and your hand in this matter—(*With a gesture to DARILLA*)—more than cancels our guaranty;—Surely you die! (*While he speaks, the face of HAFED is swept with desperate emotions, under which his very form sways. He looks to DARILLA, and meeting her eyes, looks off in agony. The CALIPH's gaze widens with hope. A moment he watches the quivering figure turned from him,—then, as HAFED wheels toward him, he bends forward expectantly.*)

Hafed (*With a motion, as though shaking a load from his shoulders—his face transcendent with passion*)—Not for the world!—nor for all worlds,—with the sky for a carpet—the sun my crown, and the moon for a foot-ball! (*The CALIPH falls back, blankly. With heaving breast, stretching his hand toward DARILLA, bitterly*)—Honor and faith against yon poor maid I pushed in your trap—and Honor first under Heaven! . . . Yet I am not torn limbless;—O merciful CALIPH, to wring merely *body from soul*!

Caliph (*Sardonically*)—When you *sue* for mercy, we shall know to be merciful—

Hafed (*Dropping to his knee*)—Then for *her*, I pray mercy and gratitude!—In the name of the deeds of her Sire!

Caliph (Frowningly)—Ha!—and yourself?

Hafed (Springing up,—proudly)—I belong, as ever, to Persia!

Caliph (Hotly—looking around helplessly)—By Heaven!—must I fight for him? Live for your Persia!—live, I say, as we showed you!

Hafed—Nay, I love death better!

Caliph (Exasperated)—Then have your love!—seize him! (*With a swift leap, HAFED grapples the unprepared monarch, and making his body a shield, bends it back, till the throat lies under his sword-blade.*)

Hafed (To the CALIPH's officers)—Over your Emperor!—Come! (*Spell-bound with horror, not a soul stirs. Side and back, the high curving throne rears its barricade; in front, the monarch's own body hangs, hazarded by a movement. With eyes half-starting the Court stares, breathless.*)

Hafed (His sword at the throat of OMAR)—Swear before Heaven whether your message was justified!—

Caliph (Quivering under the steel)—Nay!—before Heaven!—

Hafed—Whether, as far as you know, I go to death true man or traitor!—

Caliph (Agonized)—True! True!—by Mohammed!

Hafed (Raising his sword and flinging off the CALIPH)—Persia!—my sword is wiped clean! (*There is, instantly, deafening tumult; a dozen men seize him.*)

Caliph (Frenziedly, over the uproar,—staggering in the arms of his officers)—Slay not!—He shall be burned! (*A piercing scream from DARIL-*

LA rings over hoarse shouts of *Allah Acbar!* . . .
Fire for the Fire-Fiend!—Burn him! . . . As the guards are hurrying him out, DARILLA, half-swooning, falls on her knees in their way.)

Darilla (Wildly)—Mercy!—Mercy!!—Ye that fought with Algeddin, see!—flesh of his flesh I kneel to you!—Save him who saved me!— (The GUARDS, with a glance half-compassionate, seek to pass by.)

Hafed (Falteringly)—Sweet Princess, rise!—it is useless— (As her women tremblingly raise her, DARILLA, with open arms, again bars the way, —now facing OMAR, but with changed aspect;—white and stern-faced,—her slim figure straight and austere in its misty draperies, she suddenly appears like a beauteous, avenging angel.)

Darilla (Her voice high and clear, as in ecstasy)—King of Arabia!—I only am blamable—burn me in place of this man!—He hath saved both my life and my honor— To rescue the child of your general, he laid his life on your word, and risked all his credit of loyalty! . . . I—I, only—have trespassed!—for, Caliph or Clown, no man can hold faulty he that is true to himself! (A hush falls over the room.)

Caliph (Embarrassed and awkward)—You see through favor's spectacles—we, with clear eyes. (To her women, pointing)—Take her yonder and calm her!

Hafed (Brokenly, as DARILLA sinks, crushed, in their arms)—With all of my heart, I thank you! (Meeting her look of dumb anguish, he looks down, shuddering. She is led aside, and he moves on firmly.)

Caliph (Hurriedly,—to RAMAH)—He fears not the fire—will nothing humble him?

Ramah (Between his teeth,—looking after HAFED)—Ay!—methinks I could reach him!—

Caliph (Low)—A thousand gold dinars! (To the GUARDS with HAFED)—Halt there! (The trio halt in the doorway.)

Caliph—Good RAMAH repairs our oversight; (Waving his hand to RAMAH) Speak!

*Ramah (Stepping forward)—Lest the Persians, in spite to His Majesty, hereafter pretend this a martyrdom, the Sword of God—(Inclining to OMAR)—stays his hand till the Ghebers themselves pronounce sentence! (Dramatically.) His own men charge Hafed with treachery! To escape trial he came,—more than to safeguard this lady—(Motions to DARILLA)—a truce shall be sent to his captains, inviting them *here* to hold trial! To prove his good will for his future subjects, our magnanimous Emperor hands over their traitor redhanded.*

Caliph (With folded hands—piously)—In the hope of converting infidels: ever our purpose!

Ad Vakass (Stepping out)—I am ready: the passport!

Caliph (Hastily drawing off and handing a bracelet, marked with a jeweled signet)—Fail not, and keep it! Bring Gudarz, Hujir,—(Turns inquiringly to RAMAH.)

Ramah—Firouz, Alzarman, Jafez, Amidar,—all honorable judges!

Hafed (Dryly)—Ay!—trap the six and you have us! (To the CALIPH)—I beseech your friendliness, rather send me back with what escort

you like, to die at their hands as you please,—or burn me now out of good will and send them my cinders for amulets—they should work quick conversions,—I will bless your *piety* if so this maid and her woman be sent free and unscathed from your borders!

Caliph (Turning off haughtily,—to AD VAKASS, imperiously)—Go!! (The ARAB, with a low salaam, hurries out. To a chamberlain)—Hang the GHEBER's weapons in yonder—(Indicating the alcove)—and guard him. (They divest HAFED of arms.)

Caliph (His eyes on DARILLA)—The maid—(Stops, gnawing his beard.)

Ramah (In his ear)—Joint guilt—joint punishment!

Caliph (Sternly)—Without full repentance, will at the same time be disciplined. (To her attendants)—See to her! (Touching his robe, with a sinister glance at HAFED—to RAMAH)—Come!—to cleansing and prayer!

Hafed (With a sudden, supplicating movement—his voice half-stifled)—As you hope Heaven's answer, hear me! (The CALIPH, astonished, turns.)

Hafed—You have wreaked your will,—no matter how,—to the fool, his folly!—but the dying have sometimes a privilege. . . . My fault recoils on this maid,—hedge us round column-thick, but in God's name, give me one moment to privately speak with her!

Ramah (Quickly,—seeing the CALIPH hesitate)—Your Majesty will not countenance—

Caliph (Unctuously)—God's Vicar is generous!—(Picking up an hour-glass, in which the sands

have run low, he gives it to HAFED'S guards.)
Take this out, and while the sands run, let them be!

Ramah—But, Majesty— (The call of the muezzin resounding without, the CALIPH turns suddenly.)

Caliph—To prayer!—To prayer!! (He leads out, loftily, the rest of the company following. The GUARDS, last, retire by the several entrances, leaving only DARILLA and HAFED. She, white-cheeked and motionless, regards him dazedly. He takes a step forward and stops, his eyes searching hers;—twice he attempts to speak, but the words stick in his throat, and he turns his quivering face from her. Then, desperately, he approaches her.)

Hafed (Low,—voice and gesture full of entreaty)—Darilla!—I am to blame. . . . Forgive me!

Darilla (With a sobbing breath, half wildly)—You!—You are to die for me!

Hafed (Passionately)—I could ask no death sweeter, if so you were safe— (His hands drop, clenched, to his sides.)

Darilla (Moving nearer, amazed)—What!—You—who hate women—

Hafed (With deep emotion)—I knew not a woman so brave and so guileless had sweetened the world! . . . Before you came, I thought of Love as an evil, mischievous bird, sharp of beak and claw,—safe only when leashed to Reason and handled by its tamer, Time. . . . I lay on a desert, afar from the palms and the water-founts, deeming Truth lost, because I had followed a mirage. . . . (Leans to her, passionately.) Then, in your face shone all

the dear quest of my dreams!—your voice called like a thrush, and my heart knew its mate, and shook with its songs of ecstasy. . . . By a magic as old as the universe my desert bloomed out more fair than Delight's silver gardens,—more sweet than with leaves of the jasmine. . . . Except for these walls, 'twere as though you and I had drifted through sapphire seas to islands of Paradise, breathing the perfumes of Heaven and drinking the Peris' music. . . . For I know that I love you!—and I pray—Oh, I *feel*—that you love me!

Darilla—I love you!—yes! yes!—I love you—
(*She falls on his breast, weeping wildly.*)

*Hafed—*Courage, love!—*listen!*—(*Lowering his voice*)—I shall think of a way—there *must* be a way—for our rescue! I am hard to get rid of—you were made for good fortune—There's always a way—and I'll find it!

Darilla (Looking up tearfully)—Ay,— (*She starts aside at a rustling of tapestries. The curtains parting, the GUARDS and the women enter.*)

Hafed (Meeting DARILLA's look with a forced air of confidence as he is led off)—Remember! (*With brimming eyes, she nods dumbly; ZENNA, weeping bitterly, folds an arm around the girl, as they follow the waiting-women,—DARILLA looking back miserably till HAFED is gone. Turning, she shrinks back on confronting RAMAH, entering.*)

*Ramah (Stepping in front of her,—peremptorily to the women)—*Wait without—I would speak with Her Highness! (*While they obsequiously withdraw, the song-girl, ILYA, peers in a side entrance, and glimpsing RAMAH, unseen, slips within, hiding behind the great tapestry.*)

Ramah (*Motioning ironically, where HAFED went out*)—*That's ended!*

Darilla (*Icily, while her voice trembles*)—The worse for your honor, my lord.

Ramah—My honor's sum is,—to love you!—So that, pride in the dust, I crawl back to plead like a slave for your rescue! I—I, only,—can save you from mortal disgrace,—and—great God!—(*Seeing her look*)—am I a pestilence?—Then, turn me by love! As the horns of the moon to her star, I will reach to your liking! Make me in what mould you will—I will kiss your hands! . . . Let these arms but defend you,—this breast be your shelter—Shame shall pass from you, and the wife of Ramah laugh overmore at fear!

(*With arms folded tight on her bosom, DARILLA draws back, shuddering.*)

Darilla—God save me from love that mingles its kisses with scourging!—Could I ever have loved you—as He knows I never could!—your knout had beaten love out. I will die by scourging—by axe—gibbet—poison!—rather than enter your life,—for I loathe you,—even as I love Hafed, the Gheber! (*Her voice rises passionately.*) Ay, if he die, I'll joy to die with him—nor Caliph nor Vizir nor any fiend on earth shall stay me from his doom! And so I go to my women. (*As he stands stupefied, she passes him swiftly, and is gaining the door, when, with a cry of rage, he springs after her. The curtain swings back, and ILYA stands in his way.*)

Ilya (*In a low, thrilling tone*)—Ahmed! (*He starts back with clenched fists, biting his lip. DARILLA goes out.*)

Ilya (Reaching both hands to him,—softly)—She stabbed you,—I wait to bind up the wounds! (With a muttered imprecation, he turns away sullenly. Dropping her hands, her head sinks despondently; then, looking up, she timidly moves a pace nearer.)

Ilya (With great sweetness)—I mind the time well—though it seems in some other life, for you were both little and kind—when, not a thorn in your thumb, but you crept through the hedge that this hand might pluck it! . . . Not an early fig, or choice comfit, was yours, but I had the half—(Stops, with breast heaving.) What flower but love hath gratitude?—It is long since then—I am woman grown,—and my heart holds a thousand blooms—only—for you! (Starting, and still turned away, he shrugs his shoulders in silence.)

Ilya (Her voice intensified)—I have looked to your love as poppies wait for the sun,—while indifference whipped me like wind-swept stubble! For you I have lived—without you I die,—though near you my joy is torment. . . . But she—! (Shudderingly points to the door.) Oh, we are women both, but like—as fire and ice! (He drums with his fingers impatiently.) Though her beauty were moulded in Paradise, what should it profit you? As soon might blood run—the heart leap—in shapes of hewn marble, as you win a smile of her! Justice, O Pitiless! measures you scorn for scorn! (Stretching out her arms, appealingly,—her voice low and broken)—Learn then to pity me!

Ramah (Wheeling round, raging and scornful)—Women are ye both—but you, by that one,—(Pointing after DARILLA)—hideous! (She shrinks as if

from a blow.) Have you no glass? *She*—is a rose in the dew!—*Thou*,—shrunk and swarth as a dried apricot. . . . Your bones might serve for nut-picking—not kisses! (*With a cry of anguish she buries her head in her arms, hiding her face in her hair.*)

Ramah (*Making to pass her*)—Away!—Away!—thou baleful, bellowing screech-owl! (*Reaching the door, turns.*) And take for thy need, that a round cheek and a roguish eye are conquering weapons where angels would weep and fail! (*He strides out.*)

Ilya (*Sweeping back her long locks, gaspingly*)—Prince of Cruelty!— (*With a shriek she falls headlong, tearing at her black hair wildly. As she lies weeping and prone, the curtains move stealthily, admitting the large head and misshapen shoulder of the Court-Buffer, ISMIEL. His inquisitive look changes instantly to one of distress and compassion. Closing the curtains behind him, he softly steps in.*)

Buffer (*Standing beside her, — gently*)—Princess!—Why are you grieved?

Ilya (*Raising her storm-swept face to look at him, —bitterly*)—Mock me not with dead titles! Child of Prince Sohrab I was, but now—Scorn's daughter! (*Dropping her head on her arms, she falls once more a-weeping.*)

Buffer (*With feeling*)—Behold then, thy foster-brother!—for if Scorn be not mine own Mother, —I was early put to nurse with her;—cuffed awake o' mornings,—kicked to bed o' nights,—and jeered at all day long; till I grew bold enough to return her some stray licks and pinches. What can I do for thee, Sister?

Ilya (Sitting up suddenly and speaking slowly)—
What wilt thou do for me?

Buffoon—Ask and see! Life, with this twisted body, costs many pangs,—Death but one; and for you, I'll not be particular. Say on!

Ilya (Springing up,—low and guardedly)—
Ismiel! Thou knowest full well why I left Persia; that I gave up home—friends—rank,—my world!—for the lot even of singing-girl in the enemy's court,—(*Her voice breaks*)—and the hope of touching a heart that was already flint! I followed Ramah, and he despises me,—Oh, mockery of Love! . . . But thou—(*Glances about hurriedly and speaks yet lower*)—once staunchest of Persians, now apostate to Omar,—*where is thy heart?*

Buffoon (Kneeling, with arms outstretched,—softly)—*Here!*

(*She recoils, dismayed.*)

Buffoon (Rising hastily)—Nay, I hope—ask—nothing of thee!—to whom I, worthless within and without, may nothing offer! I craved but the light of your face—and followed to find it!

Ilya (After a swift look about,—as before)—
Then turn with me, Ismiel!—for, by the God above—though my body be prisoned, heart and soul I fly this hour to my country! (*Searchingly*)
You are with me?

Buffoon—Forever!

Ilya (In a whisper,—breathlessly)—*Prove it!*
Since the entrance-guards have been doubled, one Arab, only, stands at the door of Hafed! 'Tis Geshem—who loves me, I think—since Fate jests with us all! Whisper him that I wait him in the west arbor: take his place—unbar the door, or

force it—free Hafed—and—Stay!—When Kaled has lit the lamps here, no one else will pass shortly. Bring Hafed here,—take the weapons yonder—(*Points to the alcove*)—Back of that door is an unused passage with a low end-window—one bound puts you over the hedge—there's an old fountain-basin gone dry, with a pipe a big man could crawl through—

Buffoon (Eagerly)—*And the pipe runs under the wall!*—

Ilya—Ay!—get without quickly and fly for some spot out of Persia, till the toils of Ramah be loosened. Geshem shall hold his discovery,—and Heaven help ye both! . . . *Save Hafed!*—Save him to our country, Ismiel!—wipe out our recreance—and be first in this poor heart—(*Falteringly*)—while my life—lasts!

Buffoon (Joyfully)—For that, I would roll the world from its axis, had I way, and thou bade me! I fly for thee, Ilya! (*Going.*)

Ilya—Victory! Victory, Ismiel! (*They hurry out in opposite directions. They have scarcely gone when KALED, humming a rude air and bearing a lit taper, enters and goes slowly lighting the lamps.*)

Kaled (Singing)—

We earth-worms grovelling in the dust,
Blindly a-grope for drink or crust,

Great Allah own:

Since not King Mahmud on his throne
May bind the softest breeze that sings,
Nor fold again the flow'ret's wings
From Summer flown.

(Being old and halt, several moments elapse ere the spacious room is ablaze with radiance from the many precious hanging-lamps. Near the end of his ditty HAFED and the BUFFOON peer in from the shadow of the entrance, R. When KALED has gone they hasten in, a-tiptoe.)

Hafed (Low,—hurrying BUFFOON to the alcove)—Quick!—Arm and fly—

Buffoon (Halting, astounded)—What!!

Hafed (Dragging out weapons from amongst the Mussulman uniforms)—The troops!—Persia—and more—depends on it!

Buffoon—Are you mad?—Meet those six with Ad Vakass— (Motions as though cutting his throat.)

Hafed (Arming and thrusting other weapons on BUFFOON)—We'll take a road round—

Buffoon (Dolefully)—Ay,—and those left behind will ask you in to the fire!

Hafed—Not till they follow me here—

Buffoon (Falling back, open-mouthed)—Omniscient Allah!—Back here?—

Hafed—Dolt!—show the way!—the maid must be rescued—my comrades must have fair play!

Buffoon (Backing against the door)—But—your head, when your comrades condemn you?

Hafed (Exasperated)—Bury it. Come!

Buffoon (Squatting, legs crossed, on the floor)—Nay, if our noddles be lost, let us e'en save our legs—

Hafed (Half-frenziedly, tapping him smartly with his sword)—Rogue!—there are times on this old topsy-turvy, when to lose means to pluck from

the peaks of Glory laurels immortal; to bear to the shrine of the stars rich banners of conquest; to carve on the pillars of Fame a tablet eternal!
(Wrenches open the door) Follow me! (Rushes out. The BUFFOON, thrown to his feet, close after.)

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE: *The CALIPH's Court-yard. In the foreground, R., a splendid pavilion, its canopy of crimson brocade, wrought with gold, is supported by pillars of silver. On the ground beneath is a priceless carpet of Persia, scattered about with silk and tapestry cushions. On the right stands a resplendent throne-chair, over-hung with the captured standard of Persia,—the much-jewelled Apron of Kaweh,—surmounted by the flag of Arabia. Conspicuous on the left is a brazen pedestal, topped by a carven lion's paw, upholding a translucent stone sphere, glowing at its center dull-red, shading outward red-copper.*

In the background, encircling the pavilion, a terrace set with flowering pomegranates and lilies. To the left a fountain. Beyond the grove, far away against the horizon, like a plume in the cap of Heaven, the silver and azure top of Mount Ohod. The CALIPH, clad simply as ever in white, is seen with RAMAH, HASCHEM, HILLAL and others, approaching the pavilion at rear. In the act of entering, the CALIPH turns.

TIME: *Three days later.*

Caliph—Friends, leave us here and watch, even against hope, for poor Ad Vakass;—since it would seem this project trips, we must take thought alone. (*As they withdraw, he touches RAMAH's shoulder, beckoning him within, and the two enter hastily.*)

Ramah—Shadow of God, fear not; I would stake this hand Ad Vakass comes——

Caliph (*With a quick glance about, drawing him further*)—Think you such fancies fret me? *This head*—(*Clasping it*)—for Vakass' surety!—and that he hath the Persians fast by the rope of suspicion. . . . Shall they trust Hafed, who doubt their dead mothers?—(*Smiling wryly*)—haply remembering their lives! Ad Vakass is safe,—(*Gloomily*)—But a raven croaks in our bosom. Look yonder! (*Glowing, he points to the stone on the pedestal.*)

Ramah (*Glancing,—vaguely*) — *The Sun-ball*——?

Caliph (*Anxiously*)—See you naught strange there?

Ramah (*Staring*)—Nothing, Sublimity; unless—long looking dulls it——

Caliph (*Excitedly*)—It pales each hour since sunrise!—— (*RAMAH, starting, whitens.*)

Caliph—From its own blood-color,—like these rubies—(*Thrusts out a hand be-ringed*)—*this!*

Ramah (*Slowly,—in a forced tone*)—Ay,—'tis altered! . . . What saith the magian, Behwar?

Caliph (*Moodily*)—That were it a star, he could read it; or a moon, he might prate wisdom wisely; but it being—you Persians claim—a sun-stone,—of mystic influence, and, in sort, Destiny's weather-vane——

Ramah (Somewhat haughtily)—It was so held by the whole Sassan dynasty——

Caliph (Dryly)—Ay!—we need your Persian diviner. 'Twas ill-judged, killing him! (*Approaching the pedestal, stares down at the stone, perplexedly.*)

Ramah (Following, uneasily) — Tortures, Majesty, could not open his lips but to the King——

Caliph (Turning, searchingly)—*He never raved——?*

Ramah (Evasively)—Nay, only once mumbled——

Caliph (Clutching his arm)—Praise Allah!—*What?*

Ramah (Hesitating, then forced to it, desperately)—“Beware the change!” (*Instinctively both glance to the Sun-ball, which shows even paler. For an instant their eyes meet, consternated.*)

Caliph (Lifting his arms toward heaven as he strides away)—Soul of Mohammed!—(*His arms drop despairingly.*) Must we, like bound and gaping fools, watch while this poison-bloom swells into fruit,—then eat it? I am not so moon-mad as to cheapen the power yonder,—(*Points without to the Sun*)—and strangely since dawn—(*Striking his breast*)—hath my raven croaked of the Gheber—— (*A trumpet signals without.*)

Ramah—Ad Vakass!—— (*Another trump answers, amid shouts of rejoicing.*)

Caliph (As the noise approaches,—motioning to the Sphere)—No word of this!—— (*AD VAKASS enters, with six PERSIANS, escorted by many of the CALIPH'S officers.*)

Ad Vakass (Throwing himself at the CALIPH's feet)—Great OMAR!—late, but here!

Caliph (Motioning him to rise)—Valor, not Vakass, is thy name with Omar! . . . (Turns to the PERSIANS) And ye, O generous Guests, shall find your trust repaid. (By a gesture including all, who have paused at some distance) Be welcome!

Amidar (Stepping forth, haughtily)—We come not, O king of Arabia, to sup of your courtly sweets,—for our festal robes have been torn into swaths and shrouds! We come at your whim, secured by your sacred pledge, from a weeping Motherland,—to wipe from her page of heroes the name of a curst Arch-Traitor. Say no more, but produce him!

Caliph (Smoothly, to AD VAKASS)—Who is this pepper-pot?

Jafex (As eldest, advancing proudly)—One who has seasoned your dishes,—whose faith burns true. . . . (Beckons his other comrades.)

Caliph (Smiling grimly, to RAMAH)—They cling to the fire!—

Jafex (Presenting all five)—Amidar, Firouz, Alzarman, Gudarz, Hujir,—of whom, not vaunting, you have heard ere now:—(Laying his hand on his breast and bowing profoundly)—Jafez, your servant,—not your subject!

Caliph (Fervently)—I would to Heaven ye knew my heart toward you!—Ye might disclaim me less harshly. I would not only give you this traitor, but cure your sick country through honorable peace—

Amidar (Quickly)—She chooses more honorable death—!

Caliph (Blandly, to the rest)—I appeal to you,
—cool him, lest we all smoke!

Gudarz (Half-derisively, slapping AMIDAR on the back)—Ha!—Take you, and give not?

Caliph (As AMIDAR turns off sullenly)—'Twere
Kinglier to give all!—and so would I—

Hujir (Determinedly)—Just give us *Hafed*!

Caliph—Ay,—Ay—only first hear me:—You
think we have bled our people—braved your hatred
—for some alms of conquest?—We need not nor
want them, save to spread the Stream of True
Waters—

Alzarman—*Hafed* first, and talk after!

His comrades (In chorus)—*Hafed* first! . . .
He shuffles! . . . *Where's Hafed?*

Caliph (Vexedly, to an officer)—Go fetch the
Gheber—*Ha!*— (At a sound of commotion
all turn; from the rear, *GESHEM* rushes in, breath-
less.)

Geshem (Wildly,—dropping at OMAR's feet)—
Slay—slay me!—The Gheber!—(His voice fail-
ing)—gone! (A very howl of rage rises; every
blade leaps forth, threatening.)

Caliph (Hoarsely)—Gone!—and thou livest?—

Geshem (Beseechingly)—Hear me—then slay!
. . . At sunset yesterday,—I still on guard—
Ismiel, thy fool, ran up—in thy name took my
place—bidding me mount and speed as wind to halt
Ad Vakass, and turn back these Persians. . . .
Flying to thy will,—from road to road, within a
half-league of the Gheber camp, distraught I tore
—to find at last he'd passed me! . . . Rushing back
and up the passage—(Gasps, shuddering)—Allah

receive me!—*Ismiel was vanished!—Hafed gone!*
(As though overcome, falls prostrate.)

The Persians (Stormily, over the prostrate Arab)
 —*Treason! A treason!!—*

Caliph (Fiercely) — Treason—? Treason—!
Haroot and Maroot!—Devil's magic, say!—Or—
stop!— (To RAMAH) — The fool — this
Ismiel—

Ramah—A Persian convert of the Devil's
own!—

Caliph (Trembling with rage,—to the GHEBERS)
 —*Ay!—there's your treachery!—the Persian brand*
 —*that sells a sovereign—turns again and sells—*

The Ghebers (Springing toward him)—Dog!—
Villain!!—Demon!!!—

The Arabs (Turbulently, while those nearest the
GHEBERS clutch with them)—A plot! . . . 'Way
with the truce!—a plot!!— (In the ensuing up-
roar, while the PERSIANS make desperate defence,
GESHEM, unnoticed, crawls off.)

Caliph (Shouting over the din, to his men)—
The truce is dead!—your honor lives!—Lay on!
(The frenzy quickens. By force of numbers, the
PERSIANS are overpowered).

Caliph (Hastily)—Bind them and hear me!—
(The prisoners, more or less wounded and bleed-
ing, are quickly shackled together, save AMIDAR,
who, at the CALIPH's feet, lies mortally hurt and
expiring.)

Caliph (Scathingly, to the GHEBERS)—O,
spawn of Treachery!—With your lep'rous tricks,
thought ye to fool us? We gave you honest truce
to gain your traitor,—but, by the fiend!—'tis ye,—
ye, only, stole him and pushed here, bent upon death

and slaughter! Your game is lost. . . . (*Waves his hand to the GUARDS*) *Behead them!* (*As amidst loud cries of approval, the guards start out with the PERSIANS, a shadow falls in the pavilion.*)

Caliph (*To RAMAH*)—Even the day seems darker for these swine—— (*A startled cry, and, in the same breath, excited exclamations, cause the CALIPH and RAMAH to turn;—a sudden dimness of the sun is discernible without, while everywhere spreads a cold shadow.*)

Caliph (*As though by an inexplicable impulse looking to the Sun-ball and finding it colorless gray*)—*Allah!*—(*Catching RAMAH's arm, points*)—See you it? *What*——

Several Voices (*In awe-stricken tones*)—*The Sun!*—*The Sun!*—*Allah Ilallah!*—*the sky!!*

(*They are echoed without by the screaming and shrieking of women. As though withdrawn from the heavens, the Sun has faded from sight and a shadow of twilight fallen, which gradually deepens. Terrified and groaning, the company falls on its knees, save the GHEBBERS in bonds, whom the guards, fleeing to the feet of the CALIPH, leave standing apart. The screams without growing nearer, the darkness is filled with shrieking figures of women rushing, frantic, in the pavilion. Then over all settles a mid-night Darkness. Into the murky sky, glimpsed beyond, a star here and there trembles palely. The pavilion resounds with groaning. Suddenly, dread as thunder, from the Court-walls beyond, sounds deafening crash after crash, followed by a terrible tumult of noise, like the crumbling of mighty stones and the fury of drums in battle. All other sounds drown;—only in the black-*

ness of the pavilion the crouching forms show vaguely, swaying like souls in torture. The pandemonium grows nearer; the pavilion fills with a noise of trampling and clank of metal; then, the noise suddenly ceasing, there is a moment heavy with silence, while the darkness gradually lifts, and, amid a loud blare of trumpets, the sun shines forth unobscured. The noonlight streams through the window on a strange scene. Sternly facing the half-prostrate CALIPH, in front of the shackled PERSIANS, stands HAFED, sword drawn, at the head of a large body of GHEBERS, armed to the teeth. At HAFED'S right hand stands SERJUS, next him, ROBIER. Trapped and surrounded, the bewildered ARABS show quite overwhelmed, and with eye-balls starting, men and women stare horror-struck. In a corner aside, clasped in each other's arms, kneel DARILLA and ZENNA,—the girl-hugging tight to her bosom the cross. The Sun-ball shows utterly dark. For one hushed and motionless instant all seems a fantastic picture. Then the CALIPH, cowering, raises himself and stretches a shaking hand toward HAFED.)

Caliph (*Faltering,—as one in a dream*)—What—wouldst—thou?

Hafed (*Roundly*)—Everything!— (DARILLA, springing up, leans forward, her face luminous, expectant. The CALIPH draws back, shrunken together. The ARABS with a feint of protection rise to their feet.)

Hafed—But, by your admirable example,—“first to the lady!”—

Darilla (*Impetuously meeting him as he strides*

toward her,—her voice between laughter and sob)
—*Hafed!*—*Hero!*—

(*Radiantly he leads her back to his former place. Motioning his men, they cut the bonds of their comrades. The CALIPH regards him shudderingly, as, stooping to feel of AMIDAR'S heart and finding it still, he rises, once more stern-faced.*)

Hafed (*With a pitying gesture, as, at his sign, the body is gently borne out*)—Such losses are dearly bought with even a nation's peace,—and we,—are a handful! But, praise Heaven!—the time is past for a barter. We *demand*—not *plead*,—and you, O CALIPH, may no more deny us! Much of Persia lies dead,—more writhes in your clutch,—but from this hour on, a moiety of her bruised borders is free of your heel and Mohammed's! (*The GHEBERS cheer loudly. The CALIPH shrinks further.*) Our unconquered remnant shall live as they list—pray as they please—and swear by what prophet they fancy—(*Raising his sword*)—so *help me Heaven!* (*The GHEBERS, whirling high their weapons, cheer wildly. DARILLA softly kisses her cross—while her eyes, misty, yet a-light, shine upon HAFED.*)

Caliph (*Tremblingly*)—We would not deny you—

Hafed (*Snatching from his bosom a parchment and thrusting it before the eyes of the CALIPH*)—On my soul you will not!—For reminder—there at the bottom is a little space—write in it, "*Omar*"! (*Thrusts into the CALIPH'S hands a reed dipped in ink, proffered by the BUFFOON, who has held it and the ink-vessel, ready. The CALIPH, after a des-*

perate look around him, takes the paper, and shakingly signs.)

Caliph (With an effort at composure, to his people, as HAFED receives back the parchment)—Friends all,—in yon late-blackened sky methought we saw great Allah's frown;—(Points to the still-darkened Sun-ball)—that sacred sign confirms us;—(Spreads out his hands, unctuously)—Bend to Heaven! . . . (The GHEBERS, with significant looks at their weapons, smile grimly; the ARABS bow low in submission.) For ourself,—(Looks upward piously)—weary and war-sick, we crave no other than this cup of Peace! (Seeming suddenly aged and ghastly, he sinks into the throne-chair, a helpless huddle.)

Ramah (Defiantly)—But I,—will cleanse the Cup! (Lunges furiously at HAFED's throat. DARILLA, with a cry of terror, springs forward.)

Hafed (Putting her back, and with wondrous agility parrying,—to RAMAH)—Beware my prophecy!

Ramah (His eyes grown murderous, thrusting with lightning swiftiness)—False prophet!—Ah-h-h! (HAFED, being forced to strike out, RAMAH is pierced to the heart, and, groaning, falls dead at the feet of OMAR,—his face being hid in the CALIPH's mantle. With a shriek, ILYA bounds forward and frenziedly clasps him.)

Ilya (Frantically) — Ahmed! — Ahmed!! (Snatching at a tiny scent-bottle hung on her bosom, even as the BUFFOON and DARILLA, with startled cries, spring to her, she swallows its contents.)

Ilya (Gaspingly,—her form, supported by the BUFFOON and GESHEM, growing rigid,—her face

wildly seeking the dead man)—Ahmed!—we drink—the Cup—of Peace! (*Lifeless, her head falls back on the BUFFOON'S bosom.*)

(*DARILLA tearfully kisses her brow as the BUFFOON, groaning in anguish, is assisted by GESHEM to bear out his woeful burden, amid the sobs of the women and the pitying glances of all.*)

Hafed (*Half-compassionately, as others follow with the body of RAMAH*)—Poor wretch!—Fate would not be juggled! (*Stepping to the side of DARILLA, he turns gravely to the GHEBERS.*)

Hafed (*Raising his hand, solemnly*)—Comrades who touch hands with Freedom,—all is not finished! When ye followed me here, I was under your ban, and I swore when our business was through to abide by your sentence——

The Ghebers (*With mighty shouts drowning his voice*)—Lead us! Lead us still! Hero!! . . . HAFED forever!——

Hafed (*His head high with a look of proud joy, —his voice a-thrill with emotion*)—Brothers-in-arms, in my dreams I shall always lead you,—all my days I shall love you,—but the march is done, and home beckons. . . . In your ears are the hymns of Victory; in mine,—song-sweet down the distance, the voice of my Mother, France! . . . Long has she called me unheeded, but today I yearn for her face,—and tomorrow, please God! I shall turn to her bloom-bright shores with the orient-treasure—(*Lifting DARILLA'S hand, he clasps it firmly, smiling the while at her blushes*)—ordained of the stars for the Gheber!

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